

English language-learning experiences of bilingual teachers of
English Language Learners: a source of personal practical
knowledge and critical pedagogy

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Abstract

This study set out to examine the English language-learning experiences of formerly classified ELLs, who are now teachers, as a source of personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1985), and its influence on their teaching practices for ELLs. The conceptual framework was set around the theories of personal practical knowledge and critical pedagogy. The methodology selected for this qualitative study was phenomenology per the guiding principles set forth by Van Manen (2006). Data collection methods following this phenomenological approach were semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document and records review. The collection of data took place during the 2015-2016 academic year, with the participation of three teachers, who were formerly classified as ELLs, working for school districts in Northeast Kansas. The major findings of the study revealed that participants developed personal practical knowledge from language-learning experiences, classified into three main themes: (a) coming of age, an experience of growth; (b) attitudes towards ELLs, attitude; and (c) influence of the language-learning experience on pedagogy for ELLs. The tendency to apply personal practical knowledge in teaching ELLs was mainly based on the connections participants made between themselves as language learners and their ELLs. An additional outcome of the present study is the portrayal of the participant's personal narratives, underscoring their personal stories related to their language-learning experiences, and the factors that have become a priority in their teaching practices: language, education, and students. Limitations of this study were related to the small number of participants, their specific profiles, limited contexts of interaction, data collection procedures, and data analysis. Implications are offered for the development of teacher preparation programs and curriculum planning for TESOL, professional development, and future research.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Considering the ongoing influx of immigrants to the United States and the undeniable diverse demographics of American society, the issue of language among other relevant cultural, economic, and sociological factors emerges as a constant challenge for the educational system with sociolinguistic implications. With each passing day, students from all walks of life, and fitting myriad profiles, come to the United States temporarily or permanently, taking part of a transculturation phenomenon and facing many challenges. Among such challenges, language represents a daunting one since it is an essential part to their adaptation process in a new society and learning environment. According to the Biennial Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Title III State Formula Grant Program School Years 2010–12 (U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students, 2015), the U.S. Census reported that English Language Learners (henceforth ELLs) constitute one of the fastest-growing demographic populations of students in the United States and the data submitted by States in the 2010–12 school year indicate that over 4.6 million students have been identified as LEP (Limited English Proficiency) based on an assessment of their English proficiency, indicating the overall growth of this population over the past 7 years (p. 11). In conjunction with these statistics, The No Child Left Behind Act signed in 2001 stipulates in its Section 3211:

- (1) to develop and enhance their capacity to provide high-quality instruction through language instruction educational programs or special alternative

instruction programs to limited English proficient children; and (2) to help such children. (A) develop English proficiency and, to the extent possible, proficiency in their native language; and (B) meet the same challenging State academic content and student academic achievement standards as all children are expected to meet under section 1111(b)(1).

In other words, districts, schools, policymakers, teachers and every member of the educational system are required by law to develop an effective program that not only addresses the issue of learning English as their main goal, but also the challenge of taking other sociological factors into consideration in order to provide a smooth transition for these vast groups of students, thereby enabling their academic and eventual professional success.

Despite these federal laws, the reality is that approximately 10% of ELLs seem to have no support at all to help their English proficiency limitations while another 50% receive full-fledged English academic instruction with some sort of English as a Second Language (henceforth ESL) aid, and the remaining 40% are part of a bilingual education model that comprises teaching of some academic content areas in the ELL native language and the rest in English. Overall, the exact amount of support that students receive, or even the quality of the instruction, seems difficult to encapsulate given the many existing variations across the country (Goldenberg, 2008). The lack of adequate language support results in an alarming number of ELLs exhibiting low academic performance and in the increasing number of school dropouts within this culturally and linguistically diverse student population. This bleak scenario will be aggravated by the fact that the ELL population is projected to double by the year 2050, and most, if not all, teachers will likely teach ELLs in the near future (Meskill, 2005).

As stipulated in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, the inclusion of ELLs in state assessments is required and, thus, school districts throughout the country have resorted to include these students in mainstream classrooms so they may acquire English as quickly as possible (Menken, 2006, 2008). Therefore, more than half of the ELL population spend all or part of their day with a mainstream teacher (Menken & Holmes, 2000). To complicate matters further, many states reclassify or exit ELLs from their ESOL (English Speakers of other Languages) services program before they achieve grade-level proficiency in academic English, leaving general classroom teachers to be the only ones to offer them support as they work toward developing that proficiency.

Consequently, all teachers, regardless of their pedagogical preparation, experience, certifications, or endorsements, are now responsible to rise to the challenge of catering to the needs of ELLs who may end up in their classrooms. This responsibility encompasses the teaching of academic content which corresponds to diverse subject areas, the development of English language proficiency in all language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), and the social and cultural inclusion of these individuals in the social and academic setting of schools.

In addition, there are many issues with which ELLs struggle on a daily basis that transcend the classroom setting. Many of these struggles fall outside the scope of language learning difficulties and constitute social and cultural issues such as: peer interaction, culture shock, and negotiating multiple identities, as ELLs attempt to reconcile their experiences and sort them within an acceptable frame of reference. In this sense, educators play a fundamental role in identifying, understanding, and reacting to this interplay of multiple identities and their effects not only on ELLs' learning processes, but also on their own teaching practices. From the moment students are admitted to a

particular education program to the time they find themselves in a classroom, these individuals will play a decisive role in ELLs' academic achievement.

Unfortunately, most of the current teaching education programs do not require courses aimed at preparing pre-service teachers to adequately address the needs of ELLs. In other instances, teacher education programs that do require a course or two in multicultural education, bilingual education, second language acquisition, or TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages) methods oftentimes include them in an isolated way in the curriculum. As a result, the content of these classes is usually disconnected from the rest and is not reinforced throughout the course of the students' program (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). The unfortunate outcome is that recent graduates find themselves at a loss when they realize they lack the pedagogical skills and resources to face the challenge of teaching ELLs in mainstream classroom settings.

An additional factor that directly affects pre-service teachers' preparation is their negative predisposition to these language-related classes, or to the possibility of teaching ELLs. Except for education students who major in, or seek an endorsement in TESOL, pre-service teachers are highly focused in their specialization on the content area they wish to teach (e.g.: social studies, science, language arts, math, etc.). Therefore, most of these students fail to understand the reason behind the inclusion of TESOL related courses in their programs. Oftentimes, pre-service teachers who wish to become content-area teachers argue that these courses are unnecessary since they are not majoring in TESOL, foreign languages, or any related field, and most importantly, since they are planning on teaching in a district in which it is unlikely that ELLs will be part of their class. By the same token, other pre-service teachers express that in the event that ELLs are part of their rosters, surely ESOL specialists and/or services will be readily available

to help them. Evidently, there is a significant gap between the pre-service teachers' beliefs and conceptions about teaching ELLs and the current demographics of K-12 schools in the United States.

Eventually, education majors become in-service teachers and even though they go to great lengths in trying to accommodate ELLs in their classes, they often fail to do so for a variety of reasons. Lack of adequate training, little knowledge about second language acquisition, misconceptions, limited understanding of the role of culture in learning, low expectations for ELLs, apprehension or fear, and poor parent-teacher interaction are some of the major concerns that research has found to be prevalent among in-service teachers (Dixon, 2016; Durgunoglu & Hughes, 2010; Polat & Mahalingappa, 2013; Polat, 2010; Keengwe, 2010; Pappamihel, 2002, 2007; Walker-Dalhouse, Sanders & Dalhouse, 2009; Olson & Jimenez-Silva, 2008; Hutchinson, 2013; Baecher, 2012). To this effect, little effort has been put forward to increase in-service teachers' confidence and awareness about teaching ELLs. Less than 13 percent of teachers have received professional development on teaching ELLs, and despite the growing numbers of ELLs, only three states have policies that require all teachers to have some expertise in teaching ELLs effectively (Samson & Collins, 2012; National Council of Teachers of English, 2008; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Crawford, Schmeister & Biggs, 2008). As a result, most ELLs find themselves in general classrooms taught by teachers with little or no formal preparation for working with a linguistically diverse student population.

Conversely, there is evidence that not all general classroom teachers seem to be unprepared to teach ELLs. Teachers who are bilingual (Flores & Smith, 2009; Sakash & Rodriguez-Brown, 2011; Faez, 2012; Faez & Valeo, 2012), who are fluent in a language other than English (Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Paneque & Barbeta, 2006), proficient in a

second language (Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Paneque & Barbetta, 2006), and who can speak, read, or write in another language (Bolt & Roach, 2009) exhibit attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge that effectively inform their teaching with ELLs. Among the aforementioned studies, these teachers are described as individuals who share the experience of having learned a language. However, for the purposes of this study, I specifically focused on those teachers who have had the English language-learning experience, either because they were labeled as ESL, LEP, ELL or any other official designation provided by a school district, or because they were part of an ESL or ESOL program.

Research indicates that teachers who have had language-learning experiences demonstrate favorable attitudes toward ELLs (Mahboob, 2010; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Moussu, 2010), and their languages (Flores & Smith, 2009; Baik & Greg, 2009; García-Nevarez, Stafford & Arias, 2005; Lee & Oxelson, 2006). Results also show that teachers who have language-learning experiences understand and feel more able to address ELLs' linguistic and academic needs (Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Roache, Shore, Gouleta, & Butkevich, 2003). However, there is no available research dedicated to specifically explore the influence of having an English language-learning experience in an American, formal, academic setting, and its influence or correlation to positive attitudes and effective teaching of ELLs. Furthermore, research on the overall experience of former ELLs is virtually nonexistent. The vast majority of research is focused on the experiences, issues, and challenges faced by ELLs who are currently in a K-12 or higher education setting. Therefore, a retrospective line of inquiry aimed at exploring the linguistic, social, and cultural aspects of the English language learning experience in an ESL environment may fill the dearth in the existing body of research. On the other hand, studies aimed at exploring the "non-nativeness" of teachers are either

exclusively focused on non-native English Speaking Teachers (henceforth NNESTs) who teach ESL or EFL (English as a Foreign Language), or general issues associated with being a NNEST, such as self-efficacy, discrimination, hiring policies among others. Not one study consulted addressed the influence of NNESTs on teaching ELLs in general or mainstream classrooms in the United States.

Considering this information gap within the existing research on these topics, the experience of NNESTs may significantly contribute to the edification of a robust compendium of knowledge on second language learning. NNESTs, who were once ELLs themselves, may function as the primary source through which we can gather valuable information about second language acquisition and cultural issues, based on their own experience. In addition to this, it is paramount that teacher education programs and professional development practices are revised with the ESOL issues in mind. On this note, the development of a base knowledge that allows pre-service and in-service teachers to develop a deep understanding of ELLs' linguistic and sociocultural struggles could serve as the starting point of a fruitful reform. After careful consideration of the implications emerging from ELLs' current plight, the following research design posits an inquiry model through which we may gain insight from those individuals who have been ELLs themselves and now are NNESTs who, in turn, are responsible for teaching ELLs, whether in mainstream classroom settings or in specialized language programs. By having an understanding of the experience of formerly classified ELLs, language policymakers and curriculum specialists may more effectively revamp current policies and teacher education programs for both the general or content-area classroom and special language assistance programs, especially in reference to ELLs' accommodations. In addition, current language and/or mainstream NNESTs, who were once classified as

ELLs, may reflect on their language-learning experiences and then establish connections between those experiences and their actual teaching methods with ELLs to inform their pedagogical practices.

Transcending issues related with language-learning processes, this analysis and understanding of formerly classified ELLs may also shed light into other relevant matters such as the ones associated with identity, cultural background, ethnicity, race, social interactions, and academic achievement. I argue that a critical pedagogy approach plays a fundamental role in conceptualizing the understanding and interpretation of formerly classified ELLs' experiences. In this sense, these individuals, who have now become educators, may reflect on those experiences to make decisions on effective instructional methods in terms of language acquisition, and in enforcing a culturally responsive environment for ELLs. Based on this argument, the following questions emerged as the referential framework that guided the present study:

- What are the experiences of individuals formerly classified as ELLs who have become bilingual teachers of ELLs in general classrooms or specialized ESOL programs?
- How does the language-learning experience of bilingual teachers contribute to their personal practical knowledge and influence their teaching practices?
- How does the language-learning experience help in understanding the needs and struggles of ELLs?
- How can the understanding of the language-learning experience foster critical consciousness and lead to an implementation of critical pedagogy for linguistically and culturally diverse students?

In order to find answers to these questions, I employed a phenomenological methodology (Van Manen, 2016; Patton, 2014) supported by a theoretical framework that comprises personal practical knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994), and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970). In addition, a conceptual framework of reflection and critical consciousness addressing issues of identity accompanied these theories. As I describe below, the data that represented the main source for findings in this study, were collected by conducting in-depth, phenomenological interviews (Seidman, 2013), complemented by classroom observations, reflective voice memos, and classroom photographs.

Organization of the Dissertation

In Chapter One – Introduction, I present the study and set the scene by offering an overview of the social, historic, and educational context in which the research was conducted. In Chapter Two – Literature Review, I elaborate on the foundational theories that underpin my study and analysis, along with a rationale that justifies the suitability of this conceptual framework. In addition, I provide a synthesis of the literature and research on personal practical knowledge and critical pedagogy in second language acquisition. I conclude this chapter with an overview of studies with similar lines of inquiry on the understanding of teacher's personal practical knowledge and language teaching. Chapter Three – Research Design explains how I selected and gained access to the research sites and participants for this study. I also describe the qualitative methodology employed to collect and analyze data through interviews, classroom observations, and analytical tools such as the “listening guide” and thematic coding. This chapter concludes by addressing issues of subjectivity, reflexivity, and research positionality. Chapter Four – Intermission serves as a transitional piece that leads to the narratives of the participants. This chapter

portrays a personal narrative on my language-learning experience as a result of continuous reflection over the course of this study.

Chapters Five, Six, and Seven: Lisa, Language is a Priority; Dario, Education is a priority; and Luis, Students are a Priority, present the narrative portrayal of the participant's language-learning experience, respectively. These portrayals include the participants' thoughts on their experience of language learning along with the personal, academic, and socio-cultural aspects of the process. The accounts are followed by my observations and analysis based on their stories, teaching practices, and the theoretical underpinnings of the study. In Chapter 8 – Summary of Findings, I provide a detailed report on the results of the study as they relate to the research questions, and my interpretation based on the theoretical framework. The findings are classified into three major themes that describe the participants' understanding of the lived experience of learning English as a second language in the U.S. In Chapter Nine – Discussion, I engage in a discussion of the findings and major themes that emerged from this study and how they serve to answer my research question. Chapter Ten – Concluding Remarks addresses the limitations of the study and suggests implications for the field of TESOL, education programs for pre-service educators, and professional development of in-service teachers. The chapter concludes by offering suggestions for future research on this topic.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The present study is grounded by the conceptual framework of personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1985; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997) to interpret how the participants (NNESTs) view their experiences as ELLs or ESL students in the American educational system. This theoretical framework was chosen to accommodate the breadth of diverse aspects and undertones of NNESTs' language-learning experience. The concept of personal practical knowledge also explains NNESTs' current teaching practices along with their decision-making processes regarding the teaching of ELLs in their classrooms.

Personal Practical Knowledge: Experience, Knowledge and Language

Elbaz's (1983) seminal work of a high school English teacher case study set the foundation for the conceptualization of the kind of knowledge teachers hold and use as practical knowledge. She classified the content of practical knowledge as knowledge of self, the milieu of teaching, subject matter, curriculum development, and instruction (Elbaz, 1983). In addition, the author identified the ways teachers perceive and use their knowledge as situational, theoretical, "personal", social, and experiential positing three interrelated levels of structure within that knowledge: (a) rules of practice, (b) practical principles, and (c) images. Elbaz (1983) asserted that teachers' feelings, values, needs, and beliefs—combined with experience, theoretical knowledge, and folklore—guide their instructional practice. Subsequently, Clandinin (1985) and Clandinin and Connelly (1994) expanded Elbaz's framework through their own construct of practical knowledge, and coined the term "personal practical knowledge" (henceforth PPK), which is characterized by personal philosophies, metaphors, rhythms, and narrative unity as

representing forms in the language of practice. Personal philosophy encompasses beliefs and values that derive from experience, whereas narratives associate these beliefs and values within the context of classroom events. In other words, a personal philosophy is a teacher's theory about the process of teaching, which is contextualized in experience and represents unity among that teacher's beliefs, values, and actions (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Connelly & Clandinin, 1994). Metaphors used in narrative structure represent the way teachers think about teaching and their behavior. Unity represents the cornerstone on which all narratives converge, while rhythm represents how teachers know and understand the cyclical patterns of school (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Connelly & Clandinin, 1994).

In summary, Clandinin (1985) defines personal practical knowledge as "... knowledge which is imbued with all the experiences that make up a person's being. Its meaning is derived from, and understood in terms of, a person's experiential history, both professional and personal" (p. 362). This definition is elucidated by two dimensions according to which PPK is construed: (a) personal, and (b) knowledge. By personal it is understood that all knowledge contributes to the making of a person. This body of knowledge that has arisen from circumstances, actions, and events has affective content for the person in question. With the use of the adjective "personal," the attention is drawn to the local factor that constitutes the character, the past, and the future of any individual. The "knowledge" dimension is defined as "the body of convictions, conscious or unconscious, which have arisen from experience, intimate, social, and traditional, and which are expressed in a person's actions. The actions in question are all those acts that make up the practice of teaching including its planning and evaluation" (Clandinin, 1985, p. 362).

According to Clandinin (1985), there are generally four kinds of studies that focus on what teachers know. The first one focuses on teachers' knowledge of theory, providing an account of all the pieces of knowledge they possess, such as knowledge of philosophy, sociology, and psychology. A second kind of study centers on what teachers know in practice. A third one examines teacher epistemologies of existing philosophical categories. Finally, research on personal practical knowledge constitutes a fourth kind of study focused on what teachers know (Clandinin, 1985). From this standpoint, knowledge functions as a retrospective and reflective tool that organizes and codifies our experience. It is "a contextually relative exercise of capacities for imaginatively ordering our experience" (Johnson, 1989, p. 467). This heuristic and hermeneutic type of PPK research is a helpful reference for this study because it guides the researcher to explore how participants construct, organize, and reflect, on their language learning experience from a linguistic, academic, and social perspective. In doing so, teacher education programs may be enriched and reformed to adequately prepare teachers in language acquisition and teaching, and providing better ESOL services to ELLs.

In the field of language teaching, Borg (2015) is renowned not only for his all-encompassing and exhaustive compilation of terms used to describe and define all the elements that indicate what the teacher thinks, knows and believes, but also applying them to language teaching, under the overarching term "teacher cognition." Amid this vast array of terms compiled by Borg (2015), some of the most relevant ones are pedagogical knowledge (Gatbonton, 2000, 2008), content knowledge (Howey & Grossman, 1989), pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986), practical knowledge (Calderhead, 1989, 1996), personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994), knowledge about language (Borg, 2015), knowledge in action, theories for practice,

personal theories (Sendan & Roberts, 1998), theoretical beliefs (Johnson, 1992), knowledge base for teaching (Freeman & Johnson, 1998), identity (Morton & Gray, 2010), and professional knowledge in action (Wette, 2010), all of which have attempted to encapsulate different aspects of what a language teacher thinks, knows, believes and does.

Within this line of inquiry several research studies have employed PPK to theorize the understanding and interpretation of English language teachers' teaching practices, both in ESL or EFL settings. For instance, Golombek (2009) examined how PPK informed the decisions of two ESL teachers from three concrete perspectives: (a) as learners, (b) as teachers, and (c) as participants of a teacher education program. The relevant findings of this study comprised the filtering of experience in such a way that teachers reconstructed it and acted in response to the demands of teaching situations, and the shaping of their own teaching practice. A crucial aspect from this study, which has direct incidence to the present one, is that Golombek (2009) concluded that PPK is "...an affective and moral way of knowing that is permeated with a concern for the consequences of practice for both teachers and students. Through their stories, teachers become aware of these consequences" (p. 447). This is of utmost importance for assessing the potential benefits of studies based on PPK and reflection on experience and considering the way in which they can contribute to improve the current body of literature on English language teaching and accommodating ELLs. Freeman (2002) enhances the value of reflection on experience by affirming that teacher education must teach the skills of reflectivity and provide the discourse and vocabulary that participants may employ in renaming their experience. Notwithstanding its informative results, Golombek's (2009) study recruited solely native speakers of English and ESL teachers as

participants. General classroom or content area teachers and NNESTs were not selected as participants for this research.

Similarly, Chou (2008) investigated how EFL elementary teachers conceptualized their PPK in reference to English teaching in Taiwan. The main findings of this case study underscore the importance of combining reflective practices and the implementation of PPK as a useful tool for the integration of theory and practice. In this sense, Chou (2008) asserts that the results of the study showcased the knowledge generated by the teachers as a result of their experiences as teachers and their reflections on these experiences with the students in their respective contexts. Furthermore, the study suggested the potential implications of this type of inquiry by highlighting the benefits of working with in-service teachers and how it can help researchers and teacher educators gain insight into teachers' interpretations of their instruction. Such relevant implications lay the foundation for studies like the present one, reiterating the importance of understanding the teachers' interpretation of their personal, professional, and academic experiences. However, the participating teachers in Chou's case study were elementary teachers of EFL working in Taiwan. Despite the fact that these individuals fit the NNESTs profile, it is not clear whether they were actually ESL or ELL students in the United States, although it is highly unlikely.

Narrowing the scope in terms of application, Xu and Liu (2009) utilized Connelly and Clandinin's PPK in conjunction with a narrative inquiry method to zero in on assessment in EFL. The researchers focused on the stories of a Chinese college EFL teacher to explore her knowledge and practice on matters related to assessment. The results revealed that the teacher's knowledge based on her experience with assessment coincided with Clandinin and Connelly's views of knowledge as an end product that is

highly complex and dynamic (Xu & Liu, 2009). Based on their findings the researchers strongly suggest further studies aim at exploring teachers' personal practical knowledge and its incidence of the practice of assessment, since according to them it is often unexamined. A concrete suggestion encourages the implementation of practicums or workshops to help pre-service and in-service teachers examine their prior assessment experiences critically and reconstruct their personal practical knowledge. Considering Xu and Li's recommendation and venturing beyond the scope of assessment, other issues such as reflection, critical consciousness, identity, and attitudes toward ELLs may also be explored under the theoretical foundations of PPK.

Another study representing Eastern views on PPK and language teaching was carried out by Sun (2012). Three Chinese language teachers working in a secondary school were recruited as participants for this study and results yielded emphasized the strong influence of cultural heritage in shaping PPK. This finding renders solid implications for the study of PPK from a sociocultural perspective along with its potential for the development of critical consciousness and advocacy for critical pedagogy. Additionally, an equally important aspect was revealed during the study: the conclusion that PPK is entwined with identity (Clandinin et al, 2009). In their review of the research on teacher identity, Canrinus et al. (2012) indicate that the two concepts have often been linked, and they define identity formation as "...a process of practical knowledge-building characterized by an ongoing integration of what is individually and collectively seen as relevant to teaching" (p. 123). Since Sun's study showcased Eastern views, cross-cultural studies on PPK are suggested for a better understanding of what teachers are, how they lean, how they teach, what they know and believe, and how they perform in various contexts and setting throughout their career (Sun, 2012).

On the other hand, the importance of experience in English language learning was highlighted in Woods and Cakir's (2011) study on two dimensions of teacher knowledge and communicative language teaching (CLT) of six graduate language teachers in Turkey. Their findings revealed that the pre-service teacher participants' theoretical knowledge of CLT, besides the fundamentals acquired in their teacher education program, were heavily influenced by their experience, and the authors theorized that this was a personalization of the concepts and ideas that they had read or had been taught (Woods & Cakir, 2011). Furthermore, Woods and Cakir (2011) argue that although theoretical and non-personal teacher knowledge derives from the literature and teacher education courses, once it is connected to experience, the theoretical concepts are deconstructed, personalized, and reinterpreted. Their findings reinforce the powerful impact of experience, and consequently PPK in the ownership, understanding, and interpretation of decision-making processes in teaching, and the connections between theory and practice.

On a similar note, a research study that focused on pre-service teachers through narrative inquiry was carried out by Pedrana (2009), who analyzed the reflective narratives of Latino bilingual pre-service teachers of ESL to demonstrate that intentionally or unintentionally, personal and professional, private or public experiences influence what teachers do or don't do. With this study, Pedrana (2009) sought to reiterate the notion that "...experiences directly influence who we are and what we do as teachers" (p. 175). Her findings support the importance of engaging in reflective practices in order to make sense of lived experiences. Through this process of meaning-construction, teachers of ELLs will be better equipped to help their students navigate their cultures and languages. Along the same lines, Yeager and Sivell (2001) centered

their attention on cultural variables in the ESL classroom. The researchers investigated issues of accountability and responsibility in Teacher Study Group (TSG) discussions and addressed the tensions and shock of being in the professional teaching world, which led to a proposed model for PPK. The proposal has strong implications for modifying the content of language teacher education programs that transcends the teaching of pedagogy and language. This suggested model, based on the study's findings, allude to an inclusion of cultural aspects and effective management of transitioning from pre-service candidate to novice teacher.

Finally, underscoring the significance and influence of the language-learning experience on PPK and teaching cognition, Ellis (2006) and Ariogul (2007) have both carried studies that reaffirm this premise respectively. Based on her analytical study, Ellis (2006) argues that language learning is a significant contributor to teachers' professional practice. Framed within the theories of teacher cognition and lived experience, Ellis' analysis concludes that there are numerous ways in which different language-learning experiences can lead to insights from which teachers draw upon in framing their approach to learners (2006). Similarly, Ariogul (2007) set his theoretical stance by establishing that there are three sources that affect language teachers' practical knowledge and their classroom practices: (a) language teachers' prior experiences as language learners, (b) their prior experiences as language teachers, and (c) their professional coursework. In this sense, Ariougul (2007) contends that the teachers' active and ongoing knowledge has been partly developed and shaped by their prior language-learning experiences. All three participants in the research study offered concrete examples of how their language learning years informed their pedagogical decisions, helped them build rapport with their students, and implemented strategies and

instructional techniques which they carried from their language courses. The distinct findings of these two studies presuppose a need to further investigate the way in which teachers' language-learning experience can contribute to their ELL students' learning and academic success.

Thus far, I have described how Clandinin (1985) Personal Practical Knowledge framework can help explicate how the participant teachers in this study will construct 'knowledge' from their 'personal' language-learning experiences that shapes their teaching 'practice' of ELLs in their classes. This entails an epistemological analysis of the experiences, knowledge, culture, language, and general information that educators possess. It is through this epistemology of their knowledge, or "ways of knowing," that teachers may offer a genuine and valuable input to the literature of language teacher education, because it is generated in and emerges out of teachers' lived experiences. It highlights the fundamentals of how teachers think about their work and how they are situated in the contexts where practical problems arise (Johnson, 2006).

The subsequent section of this literature review examined the limited number of studies that have been done, mostly abroad, with teachers' language learning histories, experiences, and other related variables. Two studies looked at the language-learning experiences of participants (Ellis 2006; Ariogul, 2007) who were not labeled or classified as ESL students in the United States. Another study (Pedrana, 2009) prompted the preservice teachers' reflections on their own language-learning histories as they related to their current pedagogical decisions regarding language learners. In all cases, a strong relationship was revealed between participants' experientially based knowledge and their actual practice. Although the aforementioned studies constitute a robust framework upon which to build the present study in regards to PPK and its relation to the language-

learning experience and pedagogical decisions, Sun's (2012) and Pedrana's (2009) research studies are of particular interest. The results of these studies have powerful implications for further research on issues of identity and expanding the application of PPK to other pedagogical aspects of language teaching. It is based on this open invitation within the field that the present study will aim at exploring PPK by understanding the experience of formerly classified ESL students or ELLs, who are now teachers, and its potential implications for the development of a critical pedagogy approach to language teaching.

Critical Pedagogy: Language Teaching and Social Change

In addition to PPK (Clandinin, 1985), I also draw from critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2011; McLaren, 2007) to theorize how participants construct their language learning experience from a sociocultural perspective through critical consciousness. Conceptually, critical pedagogy asks "how and why knowledge gets constructed the way it does, and how and why some constructions of reality are legitimated and celebrated by the dominant culture while others clearly are not" (McLaren & Ryoo, 2012, p. 197). Accordingly, critical consciousness refers to the ability to recognize that knowledge and metanarratives that communicate how "people are" and why "things happen" underscore the fact that it's not neutral. Rather, they privilege some groups and disadvantage others. Within this conceptual framework, NNESTs reflect on their language learning experience from a critical pedagogy standpoint, and utilize this as a springboard for discussion on the sociocultural aspects of English language learning in the K-12 setting. For a better understanding of critical pedagogy and its dimensions and implications for the present study, I present an elaborate discussion of what constitutes a detailed outline of its foundational aspects.

Critical pedagogy is an approach to teaching and curriculum, originally presented by Paulo Freire (1970), whose main purpose is to understand and critique the historical and sociopolitical context of schooling and to develop pedagogical practices that aim not only to change the nature of schooling, but also the wider society (Pennycook, 1990). Since the advent of this conceptual theory, it has been applied and adapted in several different ways across many disciplines, particularly in the social sciences; the field of TESOL has not been an exception (Abednia & Izadinia, 2013; Crookes & Leher, 1998; Pennycook, 2017; Hinkel, 2011, Norton & Toohey, 2004; Crookes, 2013; Crookes & Crookes, 2013). The role of Critical pedagogy's in ESL teaching is twofold: it fosters the simultaneous development of English communicative abilities and the skills to apply them in order to develop a critical awareness of the world, resulting in agency to improve the status quo (Crookes, 2013).

From a close and thorough examination of the literature on critical pedagogy, three foundational tenets emerge, representing a compilation of renowned scholarly authorities in this field (Giroux, 1988, 2004, 2006, 2011; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007; McLaren, 2015; Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings 1995, hooks, 2014). These tenets serve as underpinnings for the understanding and interpretation of language learning experiences along with their sociocultural implications, situated in the past from a student perspective, and those framed in the present from a teachers' standpoint. The foundational tenets of critical pedagogy, as chosen for the purpose of this research, are: (a) reflection upon the individual's culture or lived experience and a further application of that reflection to language acquisition experience and the world to transform it (praxis); (b) development of voice through a critical look at one's world and society, which takes place in dialogue

with others and continuous reflection; (c) social reconstruction geared towards equality for all citizens through active participation in democratic processes (Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004). Conceivably, critical pedagogy can be distinguished from other educational philosophies since it is mainly oriented toward classroom practices with an emphasis on learning that transcends the classroom setting and reaches out to the community. As a result, critical pedagogy constitutes a suitable interpretive paradigm for this research study, considering its focus on the sociocultural aspects of language learning. In this sense, Norton and Toohey (2004) claim that critical pedagogy correlates to English language learning regarding social change in varying socioeconomic levels of society. In addition, the authors contend that critical pedagogy enables the view of language, as a social practice that constructs the ways learners can better understand themselves, and others, when acquiring English. Therefore, ELLs become aware of and attuned to their surroundings and feel capable of socially interacting if they can comprehend the culture representations and speak English (Benites, 2012).

One of the primary goals of education is academic success, as stated in the NCLB Act, educational boards, school missions, and curriculum outlines. Thus, specialists and scholars have focused on the design of teacher education programs to better prepare prospective educators and the design of a curriculum that leads to academic achievement and continuous professional development for in-service teaching professionals. Nevertheless, the notion of academic success as a foundational goal of education transcends the academic reality to the extent that students' achievements translate into the building of a better society; a society founded on the active and committed participation of its members. Critical pedagogy shares these goals by stating that "the purpose of education is for social transformation toward a fully democratic society, where (a) each

voice is shared and heard in an equal way, (b) one critically examines oneself and one's society, and (d) one acts upon diminishing social injustices" (Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004, p. 2). However, given the strong focus that the ESL field has on the language acquisition process, philosophical, moral, and other related issues associated with education and the development of students as democratic agents had been relegated (Crookes & Lehner, 1998), until the onset of 21st century in which critical pedagogy has progressively permeated the field (Canagarajah, 2006), with the prominent work of Pennycook (2017), Kumaravadivelu (2003b), and Norton and Toohey (2004).

As stated by Canagarajah (2006), TESOL research inquiry has been aimed at studying issues related to the multi-dimensional concept of identity, encompassing race, gender, ethnicity, "otherness," and "non-nativeness" and their impact on language learning. As a result, the learning of a new language no longer entails the sole purpose of expanding communication abilities but rather a potential process of empowerment to challenge issues related to inequalities and oppression typically experienced by disenfranchised communities. The potentiality aspect of this empowerment process is contingent upon the inclusion of an educational approach, such as the critical pedagogy through which linguistically and culturally diverse students may achieve such empowerment.

A language acquisition process framed within the foundations of a critical pedagogy approach allows learners to actively question the realities of the world they are immersed in (Freire, 1970), becoming agents of social transformation. From a critical pedagogy standpoint, language is equated with ideology and power (Akbari, 2008), and creates space for exploring the cultural, social, and political dynamics of language use beyond the classroom setting. In his study, Akbari (2008) purports a model for

introducing critical pedagogy into English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms. His proposal includes raising learners' awareness of issues faced by marginalized groups, encouraging the use of learners' first language (L1), and being cognizant of learners' real-life concerns. Likewise, Sadeghi (2005) asserts that it is possible to identify three main approaches to critical pedagogy: (a) considering local and critical situations and negotiate with students their implications for teaching and learning; (b) addressing issues of power, discourse, and knowledge; and (c) connecting language and content with students' lives through engaged dialogues.

Notwithstanding the extensive research of critical pedagogy in the TESOL field (Pennycook, 2010; Norton & Toohey, 2004; Crookes & Leher, 1998; Akbari, 2008; Hawkins & Norton, 2009; Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016; Benson & Reinders, 2011; Crookes & Crookes, 2013; Andrew, 2016), little attention has been given to an understanding of the lived experience in TESOL and its potential contributions to critical pedagogical practices, language methods, and language policies. I contend that by exploring and eventually understanding how the experiences of formerly classified ESL students and current ESL educators influence instruction, we gain valuable insight that may contribute to more effective language policies and practices. Pennycook (2010) argues that the nature of second language education requires the understanding of educational practices in broader social, cultural, and political terms, and it is through critical pedagogy that we can extend our conception of what language teachers are doing. In this sense, Crookes and Leher (1998) postulate that critical pedagogy should be addressed as a social and educational process rather than a mere pedagogical method. A critical pedagogy approach to language teaching is essentially concerned with how language can affect personal and social change. These tenets suggest that the ultimate

purpose should be encouraging language educators to a constant practice of reflection on experiences as a ritualistic and cathartic exercise to frame language teaching philosophies within a critical pedagogy stance for becoming agents of social transformation through education. The critical examination of self through conscientious and constant reflection constitutes an enriching practice worthy of relevance in the foundations of teachers' professional development.

In support of these claims, Johnson (2006) affirms that a specialized language teacher education must enable language teachers to scrutinize and navigate the consequences that broader macrostructures, such as educational policies and curricular structures, have on their daily classroom practices. Arguably, critical pedagogy constitutes a robust and adequate framework to be implemented in language teacher education programs preparing teachers for such challenges.

In sum, this literature review has thus far outlined the foundational principles of the two theories supporting and guiding this study: personal practical knowledge, and critical pedagogy. The former becomes the informational source from which teachers can draw intangible resources to guide their practice and construct knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). In the field of TESOL, it encompasses knowledge related to language and memories associated with the language acquisition experience. The latter constitutes an approach to language teaching that potentially enriches the language-learning experience, and increases ELLs opportunities for academic success through the development of critical consciousness (Crookes, 2013). Critical pedagogy in TESOL presupposes a language-teaching perspective that underscores the student's agency on language acquisition, and the understanding of the power of language towards social activism and social change (Norton & Toohey, 2004).

By understanding how prior research has established connections between personal practical knowledge with the field of second language teaching and learning, the relevance of ELL teachers' learning experiences is brought to the forefront underscoring its role in accommodations for ELLs. Furthermore, the review and analysis of prior research allowed me to identify gaps in PPK studies that did not include certain participant profiles, such as formerly classified ESL learners who are now teachers in the U.S., or language learners of English (and not Spanish, or French), or the implications of implementing a critical pedagogy approach to TESOL and its relation to PPK.

Chapter 3

Methodology and Research Design

Within this chapter, I provide a detailed explanation of the selected methodological approach, the research strategies for data collection and analysis processes, in conjunction with all the steps required to gain permission from the Institutional Review Board (henceforth IRB), (see appendix A) to carry out this study. In addition, a description of the group of participants and the corresponding recruiting process is also included. Among the concluding remarks of this section, I present my subjectivities statement in the form of my own narratives of English language-learning experiences and my analysis of them.

The major data source for this research on lived experience is interviews. Patton (2014) stated that the purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else's mind, which is the target of the phenomenological study, i.e. the perception of lived experience. Thus, in-depth and multiple interviews of formerly classified ELLs and current ESL teachers will constitute the primary data collection technique of this study, in search of the participants' interpretations of their lived experiences. Observations of participants during class time were also performed in order to accompany the participants' accounts of their lived experiences as teachers of ELLs. Pairing interviews with observations increases the researchers' breadth of information and, most importantly, reveals a connection (or disconnection) between what the participants say and what they do. In fact, Agar (2008) notes that "...observation and interview mutually interact with each other, either simultaneously or sequentially..." (p. 109). This fundamental factor plays a crucial role in the subsequent phase of data analysis. For

instance, an observation carried out after an interview may reveal that the participant left something out. In a reverse situation, an interviewee may explain to the researcher a particular event observed that might have been confusing at the time. Lastly, the inclusion of both observations and interviews as data collection techniques contributes to issues of validity and reliability, which will be discussed in greater detail later in this section.

Ultimately, derived from both the conceptual framework of critical pedagogy and a phenomenological qualitative approach, I was interested in the practice of reflection for various purposes such as self-assessment, decision-making, professional development, and critical consciousness, among others. For this purpose, transcript analysis of recorded voice memos was also part of the data collection strategies in this study, as participants were requested to record voice memos reflecting on diverse topics. The primary goal of the voice memos was for the participants to reminisce over their language-learning experience as students in the United States. This addressed the description of the experiences gained as ELLs (past). Simultaneously, participants reflected upon their daily pedagogical experiences as teachers of ELLs in their respective classrooms. These accounts aimed at describing experiences earned as ELLs' teachers (present). Finally, I drew connections between the two temporal dimensions (past and present) in order to determine the influence—or lack thereof—of past experiences upon current ones, which answered one of the research questions set for this study. Furthermore, once data indicated that there was an influential effect on current teaching practices, a reevaluation of the narratives was conducted to identify those effects.

A Phenomenological Methodology

As the purpose of the present study was to understand the experiences of formerly classified ESL or ELLs, who are currently teachers in a K-12 setting, a qualitative design framed around a phenomenology approach seemed appropriate in achieving said purpose. According to Van Manen (2016), phenomenology is "...the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures of lived experience" (p. 10). Underscoring the importance of focusing on the "essence" within the description of a lived experience, Rossman and Rallis (2003) state that phenomenology is a tradition in German philosophy with a focus on the essence of lived experience. Those engaged in phenomenological research focus in-depth on the meaning of a particular aspect of experience, assuming that through dialogue and reflection the quintessential meaning of the experience will be reviewed. To this analytical process, Holstein and Gubrium (2016) add that language is the primary symbol system through which meaning is both constructed and conveyed.

Based on these fundamental concepts, a phenomenological inquiry is suitable to uncover meanings and perspectives from the experiences of the research participants. One of the main purposes of phenomenological analysis is to understand how the everyday, inter-subjective world is constituted (Schwandt, Lincoln & Guba, 2007; Van Manen, 2007; Van Manen, 2016) from the participants' perspective. In much simpler words, the researchers' desire is to elicit the participants' answer to questions such as "What was it like?", "what does it mean to you?", "what do you make of it?" In sharp contrast with other approaches, especially from a quantitative standpoint, phenomenology does not pursue facts as a definite science. The relativistic nature of the phenomenology inquiry does not allow this pursuit since there are not absolute facts in this realm. All

meanings, and thus, facts and information that stem from experiences, become known when we partake in their occurrence, as noted by Husserl (2012, 2013), who asserts that we can only know what we experience.

In addition to being a qualitative genre heavily focused on the description, analysis, and interpretation of experience, which is a focal point of this study, phenomenology also provides an analytical lens beneficial to education research inquiry. As noted by Van Manen (2016) in his discussion on human science for an action sensitive pedagogy, "...pedagogy requires a phenomenological sensitivity to the lived experience (children's reality and lifeworlds). And pedagogy requires a way with language in order to allow the research process of textual reflection to contribute to one's pedagogic thoughtfulness and tact" (p. 2). This statement encompasses the foundational elements that underpin this study. Van Manen's explanation of the relevance of a phenomenological approach to pedagogy alludes to reflection, language, and most importantly, the sensitivity to children's reality and lifeworlds. The latter is crucial in the implementation and development of a critical pedagogy framework in English language teaching, considering that central to critical pedagogy is the critical examination of the world (Giroux, 2011).

Echoing the preceding definitions of phenomenology, Creswell (2012) asserts that phenomenology is the understanding of a phenomenon as experienced by a group of individuals. The collectivistic nature of Creswell's definition is a fitting one for this inquiry, since the objective is to describe the experiences of a group of formerly classified ELLs who are now in-service teachers of ELLs. In an in-depth examination, the interpretation and analysis of these experiences will search for commonalities, another feature of a phenomenological methodology Creswell (2012) states that

“phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon” (p. 58). These commonalities are translated into the “essence,” which from a phenomenological methodology, are those abstract concepts shared in the human experience. Patton (2014) defines a “phenomenological study as one that is focused on descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience what they experience” (p. 118).

At this point it is worth mentioning the dialectic interplay of a phenomenological approach referenced by scholars in this field as “subjective-objective” duality and the issue of intersubjectivity (Van Manen, 2016; Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2012). In this sense, the perceptions of lived experiences are two-faceted as they are being interpreted by the individuals who actually live them, and by the researcher who is analyzing them. As a result of the convergence of these two interpretations, there is an ebb and flow of analytical conclusions in which the researcher must struggle to maintain a balance between objectivity (preserving the essence, not altering meanings), and subjectivity (the researcher’s own interpretations based on experience and personal history). This quest for balance is predicated on the assumption that subjectivity will be present as it is impossible for the researcher to be separated from the text and it is at the core of hermeneutic phenomenology (Van Manen, 2016); more so, when the researcher is examining a phenomenon that he or she is interested in, or has also experienced, it becomes rather personal. As a countermeasure, the researcher needs to be aware of his or her own views as they permeate both data collection strategies and analytical processes. This, in turn, will aid the researcher in striking a balance between the objectivity-subjectivity binary throughout the data examination. Moustakas (1994) refers to this explicit acknowledgment of the researcher’s biases as *epoché* or bracketing. He defines it

as a stage in the study in which the researcher, aware of his or her own experiences, understandings, prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions, suspends them, staying as close as possible to the meanings uncovered. This phenomenological line of inquiry, following a Husserlian tradition, is known as descriptive phenomenology. As a result, the researcher will provide rich, complex, and detailed descriptions of the meanings associated with the phenomenon without making any assertions. In essence, Moustakas (1994) believes that phenomenology is the first method of knowledge and one that eliminates all predispositions, prior judgments, and presuppositions; hence, his suggested method of epoché or bracketing.

Conversely, interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenology advocates the interpretation of the essence, for it is an inescapable and unavoidable process. Proponents of this school of thought such as Van Manen (2007, 2016), Heidegger (1988, 2009), Ricoeur (1975), and Dicenso (1990) argue that interpretation is not an additional or even optional process, for it constitutes an inevitable and basic structure of our “being-in-the-world.” We experience a thing as something that has been already interpreted (Finlay, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013). Simply put, “[T]he meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in interpretation” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 37).

For the purpose of this study, my theoretical and methodological stance is set within the foundational parameters of interpretive phenomenology following Van Manen (2016). A hermeneutical phenomenology approach aims for greater understanding of the phenomenon to be analyzed, and the “hermeneutics of suspicion,” which involves deeper interpretations needed to question superficial accounts (Ricoeur, 1975). Furthermore, if the pervasive and perennial notion that subjectivity is unavoidable within phenomenology (Finlay, 2005), and qualitative research in general, interpretive phenomenology readily

acknowledges this premise and provides the researcher with a viable solution for the subjectivity/objectivity controversy.

However, this phenomenological stance is set with a caveat. Van Manen (2016) contends that from a phenomenological standpoint the focus should always be on the experience lived and not on the word that it describes. Therefore, when reflecting upon the experience of talking with a friend, the word “talk” could be easily interchanged for “conversation” as long as the experience, and not the word, remains as the heart of the analysis. Thus the word “talk” can be replaced by “conversation” or “chat,” because according to Van Manen (2016) the experience of the event is what matters.

Nevertheless, when considering the inquiry purposes of this study I argue that both the word and the experience are equally important. For instance, I anticipated that the study of the experience lived by the participants would generate different findings if the focus is laid on the experience of learning a language, instead of the experience of learning English, or the experience of learning French. The qualitative and semantic aspect of the word that designates the language learned by the participants, is crucial for the process of reflective awareness. Comparatively, the argument applies to a hypothetical exchange of the words “learning” and “acquire.” A phenomenological study on the experience of learning English might generate different lines of thought from one that centers around the acquisition of English. This may be supported by the distinction Krashen (1981) has established between learning and acquiring a language. Students who are taught the explicit rules of the language, developing metalinguistic awareness, will “learn” the language but never fully acquire it. On the contrary, acquisition consists of rules and principles that are not available to conscious attention and leads to language competency.

Therefore, my contention is that from a phenomenological point of view the designated word for the lived experience under study is as relevant as the lived experience per se.

Finally, in his analysis of different qualitative research approaches, Creswell (2012) suggests the following as an effective way to decide if the research problem is suited for study from a phenomenological approach:

The type of problem best suited for this form of research is one in which it is important to understand several individuals' common or shared experiences of a phenomenon. It would be important to understand these common experiences in order to develop practices or policies, or to develop a deeper understanding about the features of the phenomenon. (p. 60)

Creswell's suggestion is a clear indication of how this qualitative research genre is suitable for the purpose of this study. The common experiences of formerly classified ELLs, currently ESL teachers shed light into the language acquisition process of ELLs, their struggles, challenges, and issues within a broader socio-cultural context, and consequently, may contribute to the development of effective pedagogical practices for culturally and linguistically diverse students. It will also have relevant repercussions on the design and development of language policies regarding ESOL services.

Consent and Access

Upon committee approval of the research proposal, I requested an IRB approval to pursue my study. With the corresponding IRB approval of protocol, I proceeded to obtain permission and consent from the prospective participants who collaborated with this research. The letter of consent included relevant details and important information about the research process and what their participation would entail. The consent form addressed how data obtained from interviews, reflections, and observations would be

handled and stored, and how the identity of participants would be protected at all times. The participants were properly and thoroughly informed about their participation in a face-to-face introductory meeting upon which they signed the consent form in agreement.

Once the participants had signed the consent forms, I followed the protocol set in place by each of the school districts involved. Two of the participants worked for a Mid-Western school district located in the southern part of the state, whereas the third participant worked for a Mid-Western school district towards the east. I will henceforth refer to the former as Peony School district (PSD) and the latter Rosewood School District (RSD) to protect their identity. RSD provided me with forms to be filled out in order to authorize the teacher's participation in the study, which entailed: meeting on-site (at the school) with the researcher for interviews, and being observed while teaching. Authorization to take photographs of the classroom before and after class was also requested with these forms. After submission, the RSD Board requested my presence in one of their monthly board meetings to ask clarifying questions about the study, and to give me an opportunity to formally present my research proposal. The approval to interview the participant teacher and observe the classroom was thereby granted shortly thereafter.

On the other hand, the PSD Board proved to be stricter in terms of granting permission and access to the participant teachers and schools. For instance, they denied my request to observe the teachers while teaching on the basis that it would be distracting for the students, and they were concerned about how my presence would alter or disturb classroom dynamics. Upon further clarification on my part explaining the nature of my observation (e.g., no recording of any kind, exclusively observing the teacher's techniques, sitting behind students, taking notes etc.), they still denied permission for

these observations. We were able to compromise after they agreed to my advisor's idea of recording the teachers with a video camera provided that students were not within shot. The video camera would be set up by the teacher him/herself in the room in such a way that only the front of the room, or where the teacher spends the majority of instructional time, would be recorded. Permission to interview teachers and take photographs of the participating classrooms was granted without any issues.

Participants

The participant profile set up for this study required individuals to be currently teaching elementary or secondary classes. For this research study, elementary teachers are defined as those individuals who teach 1st to 5th grade and, secondary-level teachers are those who teach middle school and/or high school (6th to 12th grade). In addition, the participants must have also been classified as ESL/LEP/ or ELL, or alternatively, were provided with any kind of ESOL service(s) while being a student in the United States, at any grade level in their K-12 educational experience. An ESOL certification or endorsement was not required and teachers could be male or female of any age.

I have decided to focus on these individuals, and this specific profile, for three reasons. First, the majority of the research on teachers of ELLs appears to have been done with English language teachers, who are either specialists or have some type of English language-teaching endorsement, and consequently, teach English as an additional language almost exclusively. In other cases, these studies have focused on issues related to English teaching in foreign settings and, thus, these studies have been conducted abroad. Therefore, I wanted to focus on general classroom teachers in the United States who teach ELLs, a population of individuals that has been less represented in literature. Secondly, as previously indicated, teachers at the secondary level tend to focus their

teaching on content and cognitive development and not on English-language acquisition or skills (de Jong & Harper, 2005; de Jong, Harper & Coady, 2013; Van Lier & Walquí, 2012; Walquí, 2000; Walquí & Van Lier, 2010). It is presumed that they are the teachers who are most likely to assume that ELLs' language and literacy needs have been or will be met elsewhere (de Jong & Harper, 2005; Walquí, 2000). Finally, an additional criterion for selection is based on the fact that the numerous studies that address the influence of past experience on English language teachers have recruited participants whose language-learning process has been outside the United States (i.e., English as a Foreign Language, or EFL). Conversely, the research studies which have explored the language learning experience of formerly classified ESL/LEP/ELL students in the United States are mainly about college students, or individuals who do not specify their current profession or occupation. At any rate, they do not specifically include teachers.

Therefore, I decided to recruit participants who were either elementary or secondary teachers of English as a Second Language or general classrooms, who have been in the U.S. at some point in their academic life, and classified as ESL/LEP/ or ELLs. This particular profile is partially supported by Nieto (2010), who affirms that, "No matter how empathic teachers may be of the ordeal that students go through to learn English, nothing can bring it home in quite the same way as going through the process themselves" (p. 208). And thus, being ESL/LEP/or ELLs themselves, these individuals offered valuable insight into their overall English-language learning experience and the personal practical knowledge they have developed as a result.

The specific and concrete nature of the participants' profile constitutes what it is known within the field of qualitative research as purposeful sampling (Patton, 2014). In this sense, participants are selected because of some specific characteristics or qualities

through which the researcher can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research (Patton, 2014). Additionally, Patton (2014) has delineated a subset of strategies for purposeful sampling, among which “criterion sampling” emerges as an adequate fit for this study’s selection process. The purpose of a criterion sampling selection is to review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance, which in the case of this present study, has not only been set and described, but also discussed in reference to its significance. It is worth noting that just as the main objective of purposeful sampling is to select information-rich cases for in-depth study (Patton, 2014), the criterion sampling’s main purpose is to select information-rich cases that may reveal major system weaknesses that may become opportunities for improvement (Patton, 2014). Based on this premise, the selection of this group of participants sought to reveal opportunities for improvement on the current educational system and, more specifically, in the field of TESOL.

The process of locating potential participants for this study was initiated by word-of-mouth. I contacted friends, classmates, and colleagues who may know and refer participants with the specified profile. Unfortunately, this initial search did not yield any positive results, as some of the individuals who were willing to participate lacked one or more of the required specifications (e.g.: they were retired, they were ESL students but were currently teaching in a higher-education setting, etc.). The search radius was expanded by reaching out to a member of the state’s Department of Education, who broadcasted a massive electronic missive to all school districts in the area. The electronic message requested the help of teachers who fit the profile and were willing to participate, to contact my advisor for more information. A total of three teachers replied to the request and manifested their interest in collaborating with my research. They arranged to

meet with me to learn about my study and what their participation in it would entail.

After the first round of introductory meetings, all three teachers agreed to participate and signed letters of consent. A copy of the letter of consent is found in appendix B.

Participant 1. Lisa. Lisa is a 32 year old female elementary teacher who was born in the United States but spent most of her childhood years in the western part of Mexico. She currently teaches 2nd grade in Rosewood Elementary (part of the RSD). Lisa claims Spanish as her native language and the one she uses to communicate with her husband and two children. She also uses Spanish at work since Rosewood Elementary is a school that has adopted the Dual-Language program. Lisa uses Spanish in her classroom to teach Science and Social Studies to two different groups of students.

Participant 2. Dario. Dario teaches high school Social Studies and an ESL class for newcomers and ELLs at Peony High School (PSD). He is a 43-year-old male who was born and raised in Mexico and immigrated with his family to the United States when he was 13. Dario's native language is Spanish, and affirms that it is also the language he uses to communicate with his wife and children.

Participant 3. Luis. Luis is a 4th grade male teacher at Peony Elementary School (PSD). He was born in Mexico and moved to the United States with his family when he was 8 years old. He is a native speaker of Spanish and uses it to communicate with his parents and sibling. However, he admits to speaking English with his wife, son, and stepdaughter. He attributes this to the fact that his wife is a native speaker of English and, although she is proficient in Spanish, speaking it makes her feel self-conscious, and thus refrains from it. This, in turn, has influenced his son and has made it difficult for Luis to promote the use of Spanish with him.

Data Collection

Interviews. The present study centers on the English language-learning experience of formerly classified ESL/LEP/ELLs students who have become teachers, as well as expressions, thoughts, and ideas that indicate personal practical knowledge. I will employ qualitative strategies to address my research questions. Qualitative research "...is a broad approach to the study of social phenomena" and "...is pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 3); therefore, a qualitative methodology constitutes an appropriate research tool for this study with its deconstruction theoretical framework.

Clandinin and Connelly (1994) affirm that interviews constitute a dynamic vehicle through which the teacher's experiences are acknowledged and meanings are constructed or reconstructed. Predicated on this knowledge, in-depth interviews will constitute a primary source for collecting said histories. Kvale (2007) defines qualitative interviews as "a construction site of knowledge" (p. 2). In this sense, it is a fundamental locus in which meaning is constructed, complying with Clandinin and Connelly's (1994) description of personal practical knowledge development. Various definitions and categorizations of interviews have been coined in the literature of qualitative research (Rossman & Rallis, 2012; Patton, 2014; Marshall & Rossman 2016). For the purpose of this study, however, the topical or guided interview, which is the most popular, will be adopted as the interview format. Marshall and Rossman (2016) define this type of interview as one that is scheduled—not spontaneous or improvised—and has been somewhat structured by following ideas, questions, and topics that the researcher has prepared beforehand. Most importantly and as stated by Marshall and Rossman (2016),

interviews allow the researcher access to the meanings that activities, events, tasks, and other situations hold for the participants.

Furthermore, the methodological framework of this research study has been set within the qualitative genre of phenomenology. Consequently, phenomenological interviewing constitutes a data collection method aligned with this research's methodological approach. Marshall and Rossman (2016) describe phenomenological interviewing as "...a specific type of in-depth interviewing grounded in the philosophical tradition of phenomenology, which is the study of lived experiences and the way we understand those experiences to develop a worldview" (p. 153). Most importantly, the authors affirm that there is a "...structure and essence to shared experiences that can be narrated" (p. 153). Based on this definition, the sought shared experiences of this research study will be the English language-learning experience of the participants, along with their current teaching of ELLs, and ultimately, their understanding and interpretation of the experiences in question.

In the case of the present study, phenomenological interviews were semi-structured with questions aimed at covering two main time dimensions: past, and present (Seidman, 2013). For the "past" dimension, participants will be encouraged to think in retrospect about their English language-learning experience and all circumstances related to and surrounding that phenomenon. Considering that the interview process was intended to inspire the narrator to engage in the act of remembering (Yow, 2015), the individuals should have been able to narrate these events and any other recollections associated with it. This is due to the fact that the accounts given are complex (Dunaway & Baum, 1996). Their complexity relies on the inclusion of not only the reality of the events, but selective memories regarding the events, the narrator's interpretations of the

events, and the potential influence of the researcher's questions on the retelling of the events. As a researcher, one of my goals for this study was to understand the meanings that participants have given to these experiences and the way in which these meanings have influenced their current perspectives on life; e.g., their teaching philosophy and teaching practices. This constituted the "present" dimension of the interview.

A particular and significant advantage that interviews offer in comparison to written accounts, observations, and other data collection methods is that, as a result of the interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer, the process of remembering events and the reasons why they are remembered may be shaped by the influence of the interviewer (Dunaway & Baum, 1996). More specifically, the ability of the interviewer to probe a participant's recollection process and promote further reflection may elicit the events remembered and why they are the ones being remembered (Errante, 2000).

Classroom Observations. Once I concluded the first round of interviews, I visited the participants' classrooms to observe their teaching practices with ELLs and complement the interviews. The goal of both observation and interview was to understand the phenomenon as the participants constructed its meaning (Hatch, 2002). Marshall and Rossman (2016) define observations as the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts within the specific setting chosen for the study. This process enables the researcher to conjure up the "big picture" by utilizing the five senses. When observation is used to explore teachers and their teaching, researchers first observe in order to gather evidence of their teaching and complement these observations with interviews to elaborate on the teacher's praxis (Hatch, 2002; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 2014; Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston & St. Pierre, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

With the granted authorization, I recorded my observations of the teachers' practices with ELLs through field notes and followed a previously drafted observation guide. These classroom observations were followed by a semi-structured interview with the participants to understand the attitudes and beliefs underlying their teaching of ELLs and identifying any connections to their own English language-learning experiences. I sought out to gather the meanings these teachers have given to their teaching practices and what they believe has informed and influenced them.

Data Analysis

The plurality of data analysis techniques for phenomenology studies (Devenish, 2002; Giorgi, 2009; Koivisto, Janhonen & Vaisanen, 2002; Polkinghorne, 1995; Patton, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2016) offers several possibilities for performing this fundamental step with slight variations. The present research study applied an adaptation of Moustakas's (1994) data analysis technique, which comprises three fundamental steps: (a) horizontalization, (b) textural description, and (c) synthesis of meanings. First the researcher becomes familiar with the data, then the researcher highlights parts of text that are indicative of how the participants experienced the phenomenon under study (horizontalization). With this goal in mind, I engaged in coding, which Saldaña (2015) defines as the transitional stage between data collection and extensive data analysis. After all data was collected, transcribed, and sorted, I started coding interview transcripts, observation videos and field notes, voice memos, and photographs. The process of coding entailed both decoding and encoding. According to Saldaña (2015), when data is analyzed from a reflective and interpretive standpoint to decipher its meaning, we are decoding. Once a word or a phrase is deemed as adequate to label a specific part of a passage, we are encoding. Both processes are inextricably linked

and are carried out simultaneously as they are both main constituents of the process of coding.

Saldaña's coding manual suggests a plethora of ways to go about coding depending on the researcher's personal preference, the goals of the study, the theories guiding the research, the research questions, and the qualitative genre set forth. For the purpose of this study I came up with a composite of the coding methods proposed based on two fundamental criterion surrounding the research design: the qualitative genre and the theoretical framework. Consequently, I chose coding techniques, which, according to the manual, were most appropriate for phenomenological studies (value coding) and were aligned with theories such as personal practical knowledge and critical pedagogy (narrative coding). I extrapolated this strategy of selection to the process of developing themes, and less significant tasks such as the actual way in which coding was carried out. In this sense, I followed Saldaña's advice of coding manually, rather than digitally, as he suggests the researcher has more power and ownership of the coding task when it is done on paper (2015).

Once I determined the techniques and the type of coding to be used, I proceeded to read each and every transcript in its entirety to develop a sense of orientation in regards to the participants' feelings, ideas, attitudes, and perceptions of the topics associated with the research questions. This initial analysis was influenced by the main theories guiding this study: personal practical knowledge and critical pedagogy. Therefore, the main concepts and tenets of these two theories served as the interpretive lens through which the first analyses were performed. Afterwards, I carried out a second round of readings in which I started coding the interview transcripts, along with the field notes for observations, voice memos, and photographs. As previously mentioned, I utilized value

coding which Saldaña defines as “...the application of codes onto qualitative data that reflect a participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs representing his or her perspectives or worldviews” (Saldaña, 2015, p. 89). In addition, Saldaña (2015) affirms that value coding is suitable for almost any type of qualitative study, but it is especially useful in those that seek to explore the participants’ cultural values and experiences. A suggested framework for utilizing value coding is to follow a “VAB” model through which the researcher identifies participants’ statements as follows: (1) V: Value, (2) A: Attitude, (3) B: Belief. (Saldaña, 2015) cautions that due to the nature of qualitative data, this does not always “fall into place” in a consistent manner. The wording provided by the participants may sometimes fit into two or more of the VAB categories, or it could be challenging to determine its nature so it can be properly sorted. In any event, I attempted to follow this triad as closely as possible as I engaged in my first cycle of coding. I provide a sample of this analytic task in Table 1:

Table 1 <i>Coding analysis based on the VAB Model: Values, Attitudes and Beliefs</i>	
Statement	VAB Code
“In school in Mexico, I did well in school.” “I was one of the top students the whole time that I was in Mexico.”	Value: Self-Esteem
“Well, how... Why? Why is it that I can go from being one of the top students to now being on the bottom? Is it me? Why can't I learn this?”	Attitude: Frustration
“...and so there's a lot of just mixed emotions that play in your mind.” “It's discouraging and it makes you angry...”	Attitude: Emotions
“...and then eventually you come to the realization...and I don't know if that just comes from my family, that you can't expect people to do that for you. That it's you who can make the changes.”	Belief: Confidence

In addition to value coding, descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2015) was conducted in order to complement the first coding cycle. This process allowed me to assign specific labels —or codes— to transcripts and other materials; e.g., pictures, field notes, by allocating a word or a phrase that summarizes the topic of any given text. Saldaña (2015) states that descriptive coding is suitable to almost all qualitative studies with a variety of data forms. It is extremely helpful to initial coding since it is geared towards preliminary analysis when most researchers attempt to answer the quintessential question: “What is going on here?” and other similar ones such as: “What does this mean?” and “What do I make of this?”. As Saldaña (2015) suggests, descriptive coding serves as the springboard for further analysis and reflection through second cycles of coding, theme-ing and/or categorization. At the same time, I engaged in in vivo coding (when applicable) which entails the assignment of a word or phrase from the passage being analyzed as the code itself. My criterion for instances in which the in vivo code was utilized consisted mainly in the relevance of the phrase as it related to research questions. The process of implementing two or more coding strategies, such as descriptive and in vivo coding, is known as simultaneous coding (Saldaña, 2015). Saldaña defines it as: “...the application of two or more different codes to a single qualitative datum, or the overlapped occurrence of two or more codes applied to sequential units of qualitative data” (2015, p. 62).

Table 2 presents a brief extract of the descriptive, in vivo, and simultaneous coding I engaged with at this stage of the analytic process:

Table 2 <i>Coding analysis based on descriptive coding</i>		
Statement	Code	Type
And it was a challenge at the beginning but it ended up being my favorite class	Challenge	In Vivo
I think it's one of those that you're able to go back and you can see how that affected you	Reflection	Descriptive
But based on my experiences, those memories would come back to me	Experience Memories	Simultaneous In vivo
So there's things that had happened in all those years that probably marked me for life, and I didn't even realized it at the time. As far as what causes it for you to remember it. All I can think about is that it affected me emotionally, it affected me more than just one, one level there	Feelings Emotions	Simultaneous Descriptive
It affected my way of thinking, maybe I didn't think about it at that time, maybe it's something that it happened over time, maybe it's was there all along.	Reflection PPK	Simultaneous Descriptive

Following the aforementioned process, I grouped this information into clusters of meanings labeled as themes that emerged from the preliminary analysis. The “Listening Guide” by Gilligan (2015) was a valuable tool for this task since it “...provides a way of systematically attending to the many voices embedded in a person’s expressed

experience” (p. 157). Therefore, I utilized the listening guide as my second analytical tool after the initial coding cycle. The listening guide comprises a four-step analytical process based on voice, resonance, and relationship as the research explores the inner psyche and world of the individual (Gilligan, 2015). By following the 4 steps, the researcher is able to elucidate the multiple voices that may converge in a story, tale, interview, or other sources. Its main purpose is to prioritize the importance of the individual’s voice and its effects on understanding a person’s experience within a particular context. It is called “listening” to underscore the importance of tuning in or focusing on the voices found within the text, and to emphasize the interactive process between teller and listener (Gilligan, 2015).

The first step, “listening for the plot,” is twofold and requires listening to the plot and the listener’s response to the interview. The former seeks to identify the stories being told as the researcher makes sense of what is taking place. The latter entails a conscientious effort of identifying, understanding, and bringing forward our subjectivities, biases, thoughts, feelings, and associations with the main topics of the study. This can be achieved through awareness and a thorough analysis of the researcher’s positionality as previously explained. In addition to this, Gilligan (2015) suggests carefully recording the researcher responses to what is being shared by the participant. I recorded my responses and reactions to certain passages in the form of analytic memos as I engaged in the process of listening for the plot, as shown in the following excerpt:

When we came here to the U.S. I was in fourth grade. It was not hard to learn the language, but the change was very hard. The change was very hard and I was very young, so it was easy to learn, but the emotional piece was very abrupt for me at that

time. And when we came here to the Midwest it was a lot of remembering, because we went back to Mexico and then we came back here again to the U.S. I don't think learning the language... I can't remember that being hard or difficult. I just remember a lot of emotion to it, because of everything else that goes on when someone moves to a new place. (LS05-3, p. 2)

- a) Plot: As I “listen” to this account of what the English language-learning experience meant to Lisa, I notice how the emotional distress is underscored and prioritized over the language challenge. Her account emphasized how hard it was for her on the emotional side, much more than the linguistic one. It is evident how the uprooting was much more traumatic than the language acquisition process, and thus, the memories associated with it are so much easier to retrieve. (AA. Am2, p. 3)
- b) Reaction: I found this passage quite interesting because of the nature of Lisa’s experience versus mine. They couldn’t have been more different. I realized how fortunate it was that my language-learning experience was not nearly as emotionally taxing as hers. Even her generalization of “what goes on when someone moves to a new place” presumes that is something that everybody experiences. And although I am aware that this is what most people go through when immigrating, I certainly was the exception to the norm because I don’t feel that it was as jarring as what most people endure. On a different note, I wonder if Lisa’s K-12 and language-learning process hadn’t been constantly interrupted, she would have had a more pleasant experience. (AA. Am2, p. 3)

The second step in Gilligan's listening guide centers around composing "I poems." This stage hones on the individual's first-person voice along with its cadences and rhythms. Furthermore, it forces the researcher to focus on how the individual talks about himself or herself. This is achieved by underlining every "I" statement found in any given passage. The statement must be accompanied by the main verb and other relevant words. Then, the underlined statements are "extracted" from the passage and written in a stanza format following the order in which they appeared in the original text.

Consequently, similar or dissimilar tones and "rhythms" can be easily identified as the "I" statements may complement or contradict each other. In some instances, they may neither complement nor contradict themselves, but rather shift in tone, voice, or meaning. Utilizing the same passage from the previous step, I carried out the second step of the guide as shown below:

a) Underlining:

"When we came here to the U.S. I was in fourth grade. It was not hard to learn the language, but the change was very hard. The change was very hard and I was very young, so it was easy to learn, but the emotional piece was very abrupt for me at that time. And when we came here to the Midwest it was a lot of remembering, because we went back to Mexico and then we came back here again to the US. I don't think learning the language... I can't remember that being hard or difficult. I just remember a lot of emotion to it, because of everything else that goes on when someone moves to a new place. (LS05-3, p.2)

b) "I Poem":

I was in fourth grade.

I was very young, so it was easy to learn,

I don't think learning the language...

I can't remember that being hard or difficult.

I just remember a lot of emotion to it

By analyzing this excerpt through the second step, I noticed how her testimony of her language-learning experience is dominated by the emotional challenges associated with it rather than the linguistic ones. Her ability to remember certain is also partially evidenced here, which is a recurring theme in Lisa's story as will be discussed in a later chapter. When analyzing all of Lisa's "I poems" this contrapuntal narrative is reaffirmed denoting a form of selective memory set in place, perhaps, as a defense mechanism. The contrapuntal nature of discourses is further explained in the next step.

Listening for contrapuntal voices constitutes the third step of the listening guide. It involves tying the narrative into the research question(s) and identifying the multiple layers of the individual's experience (Gilligan, 2015). This step is based on the musical metaphor of counterpoint formed by two or more melodic lines playing simultaneously. Therefore, the main goal of this third step is to identify those melodic lines, which may be represented by the participant's multiple voices or strands. In this sense, the voices or melodic lines may complement or contradict each other, and in other cases, they may represent shifts in tone and meaning. Gilligan (2015) suggests that this step may require multiple readings in order to accurately identify the voices, and subsequently specify the roles they play within the narrative (e.g., conflicting, complementing, contradicting, etc). To this purpose, the authors also recommend that once identified, the researcher listens to one voice at a time, perhaps by even color coding them. Finally, multiple interpretations can be given to these voices, depending on the angle dictated, in most cases, by the research questions and the theoretical framework.

Returning to Lisa's excerpt, the two main voices I first identified were a voice about language and a voice about emotions. In addition, I also noticed a voice of remembering and a voice of not-remembering. The former are voices that represent shifts in tone (emotional challenges and not linguistic ones) and the latter indicates oppositional ones (being able to remember certain events versus not remembering). The remembering versus not remembering voice is better evidenced in the following excerpts:

a) I don't/can't remember voice (tied to the language-learning process):

"I don't know [emphasis added]. My mom was aware of our... She obviously knew where we came from, and she knew that we had some experience with the language. But I don't know, [emphasis added] and I honestly can't remember [emphasis added] if I took a test or if I didn't. But what I do know is that I was part of the ESL program all throughout, except I think my last semester.

I don't know. I can't remember. [chuckle] I don't know. [emphasis added] I don't think my last... I can't remember. I'm not sure about [emphasis added] my last semester. But I can't remember if I took any tests. I really don't. [emphasis added]

Nope. No, because I had my high school diploma, and they never asked about... They... There was, I can't remember [emphasis added] if a question or survey about students of other languages, but because I had graduated from a high school here in the Midwest, then no. And I was not... One of my advisors suggested that I said no, because then they would make me pay for more tuition. And that was the reason why... I just remember that now [emphasis added]. But I never...

Throughout my college, language was never a problem. That was not a problem at all. (LS10-1, p. 7)

b) I remember voice (tied to the emotional process of immigrating):

I think that the time that had the most impact was definitely the first time. It was the summer after third grade, so my first year here in the U.S. was fourth grade, and I was old enough to remember [emphasis added] getting ready to move and at that time, I don't think I really understood what we were doing. I remember that the time that night before coming or traveling, the family went over to just say their farewells, and I just... It didn't... I didn't really understand what was going to happen. My parents were ready, and my mom was very emotional... And now, at this new place, I remember [emphasis added] that it was again a small town but they had an elementary school for grades kindergarten through third and then fourth, fifth, and sixth in another elementary school, and then they had junior high and high school. (LS10-1, p. 3)

Beyond the evident shifts between being able and unable to remember or retrieve certain memories, this step helped me identify the possible reasons of this selective retrieval process. Overall, Lisa seems to be able to vividly remember those moments heavily charged with emotions and feelings about her uprooting, whereas those associated to the language acquisition process seem to be easier to forget. This was also supported by the second step (“I poems”) and other passages with similar contrapuntal dissonances (I remember versus I don’t/can’t remember).

The fourth and last step of the listening guide entails a compilation of everything that has been learned thus far from the three previous steps: listening for the plot, “I poems”, and listening for contrapuntal voices. By “composing an analysis” I was able to interpret and analyze the data from each participant in order to compose their stories as they relate to the research questions and the theoretical framework (Gilligan, 2015). This

was complemented and guided by the remainder of Saldaña's second coding cycle and Moustaka's analytical framework for phenomenological studies, which yielded the corresponding chapters for each participant, showcasing their own stories associated with their language-learning experience.

Continuing with Saldaña's coding analysis, I proceeded to the second cycle of coding which presupposes the sorting of codes into themes. The codes generated during the first cycle of analysis are compiled based on similar features, generating clusters that become emerging themes. Subsequently, these themes can be further grouped to form categories. A visual representation of this process can be illustrated as follows: codes → themes → categories. The relevance of identifying themes for phenomenological studies is supported in the following statement by Van Manen (2016), which states that "...themes serve phenomenology —the study of the life world—the world as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively rather than as we conceptualize, categorize, or reflect on it" (p. 9). To Van Manen (2016) themes are interpretive, insightful discoveries, written attempts to get at the notions of data to make sense of them and give them shape. Overall, a theme is a form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand. For this purpose, Saldaña (2015) suggests Ryan and Bernard's (2003) insights on looking for repeating ideas, indigenous terms, metaphors, analogies, transitions or shifts in topics, similarities, differences, references to theoretical issues, and "absences" as they may all be potential themes.

Consequently, I searched and grouped the most frequent and relevant codes generated in the first coding cycle to establish the most salient themes through focus coding. Saldaña (2015) categorizes focus coding as a second-cycle method since it

presupposes a first cycle analysis. An in-depth analysis of the themes that emerged from this second coding cycle can be found in Chapter 8.

Forthwith, the themes were used as the basis for writing a description of the participants' experiences, which Moustakas (1994) calls textural description, including the context and circumstances in which these experiences occurred, called imaginative variation or structural description. The last step of Moustakas (1994) analytical framework entails writing a synthesis describing the essence of the phenomenon. The essence (meanings) emerges as the experiences are simmered down to an overarching concept, or concepts, common among the participants. It is the essence situated at the core of the individuals' experiences, which Moustakas (1994) denominates as the invariant structure, and they are included in a descriptive and informative passage for the reader's benefit. To this end, Chapter 8 offers a detailed description and analysis of the most salient and relevant themes that emerged from the analytical process as previously described. It also portrays the essence of the participants' experience as the invariant structure above mentioned.

On a different note, my attempts to ensure the element of trustworthiness in the present research study entailed adopting a referential model for said purpose. In this sense, I focused on the following criteria, posited by Lincoln and Guba (1985): dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability. The dependability factor of a qualitative research study lies on the descriptions of data collection and analysis in such a way that it can be replicated in future inquiries resulting in similar findings as the original study. To achieve this, I documented each stage in the research process in the form of an audit trail. This allowed me to record and keep track of all the steps taken in the process of collecting and analyzing data.

For credibility, consulting critical friends, member checking, and triangulation of data ensured that the results presented are credible, supported by the approval of the participants who confirmed that my interpretations were accurate according to their views. The latter was achieved through the process of member checking (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), in which participants verify the data as an accurate reflection of their perceptions. The member check procedures for this research study was carried out in two stages or procedures: follow-up interviews and document revision. For the former, I met personally with each participant to conduct a follow-up interview that would expand and complement my preliminary findings from the initial interviews. Another purpose for these follow-up interviews was to give the participants the opportunity to confirm, validate, and express their agreement with my interpretations, or refute them, pointing out misunderstandings or inaccuracies. The latter consisted of sending their individual narrative portrayals and a document with a summary of findings via e-mail, for their revision and approval. In addition, I offered participants the opportunity to review transcripts and field notes for clarification purposes, however, they were not in any obligation to do so. In this regard, none of the participants chose to read or review the transcripts or other notes.

In both instances, all the participants concurred with my analysis and interpretation of their narratives, and agreed that my portrayal of their stories was representative and accurate. In some cases, participants were admittedly surprised by some of the conclusions I have arrived at, and yet, they agreed with my observations. For instance, when I asserted that through inquiry-based teaching style, Luis was making strides to a critical pedagogy approach to language teaching, he stated that although this was a recurrent practice for him, he hadn't made the connections with critical pedagogy

and was glad I had pointed it out for him. All in all, none of the participants made changes to their original statements, and they all concurred with my interpretation of their experiences and teaching practices.

In addition, critical friends, a group of individuals comprising colleagues, fellow researchers, and mentors, cross-references the data analyzed and offers constructive critiques and valuable feedback on the researcher's efforts (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Finally, by means of triangulation, the researcher employs three or more techniques for analyzing data to crosscheck results (Patton, 2014). Based on this, I utilized critical friends, document analysis (photographs), and member checking, for triangulation purposes.

In qualitative studies, transferability refers to the possibility that the obtained results can be transferred or extrapolated to other contexts (Patton, 2014). This concept is closely related to generalization, one that is ubiquitous in research methodology. This factor fluctuates depending on the specific circumstances surrounding the study and its demographics. I predicted that the results from this study might be considered representative of the participant population, and thus, the implications, stipulated suggestions, and recommendations, may be applicable to some extent to ELLs and ESL teachers within the public education system in the United States.

As the last step in building up trustworthiness, confirmability refers to the extent to which results may be confirmed by others (Schwandt, Lincoln & Guba, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In order to accomplish this, the researcher should keep a comprehensive record of all procedures involved in checking and cross-referencing data, being extremely thorough with details. In this sense, confirmability is similar to dependability and credibility, for it entails record keeping, documenting, and cross-

checking. In applying this concept to my research design, I documented all tasks performed in written form and digitally as backup, carried out validity or member-checking, and requested the assistance of critical friends or peer debriefing, for triangulation purposes. (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

The member check was carried out in two parts. First, I conducted one round of follow-up or complementary interviews through which I could ask clarifying questions. Also, the participants had the opportunity to revise the transcribed interviews, reflect upon the preliminary findings, and point out any inaccuracies or misrepresentations if needed. After all the participants approved the transcripts, I proceeded with the analysis of the data. A second member check was conducted by sending the participants the study's findings for their approval, via electronic correspondence. This resulted in a unanimous approval, solidifying the validity of the study.

Reflexivity and Researcher Positionality

Reflexivity, within the context of this research, is operationalized as the analytic attention to the researcher's role in qualitative research. In this sense, the underlying premise is that the researcher should engage in continuous self-assessment and self-critique to explain how her own experiences have or have not influenced the research process (Koch and Harrington, 1998; Berger, 2015). Etherington (2009) states reflexivity requires researchers to operate on multiple levels, and Horsburgh (2003) acknowledges that the researcher is intimately involved in both the process and product of the research endeavor.

On the other hand, "Positionality is thus determined by where one stands in relation to 'the other' " (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Lee, Ntseane, & Muhamad, 2001, p. 411). On the basis of this premise I engaged in self-inquiry by asking myself

questions such as: “Who am I in the context of researching the experience of ELLs?” In an honest attempt to answer this question, I reflected upon my experiences and used them as a criterion to determine my positionality within the oppositional binary of insider/outsider. Considering the implications of this dichotomy, I concluded that I was an insider with all the participants. Although I was a graduate student and the participants were in-service teachers, we shared a common bond: one of struggling against the challenges of acquiring a new language while trying to academically succeed in an entirely new environment.

As a researcher, I am cognizant of the blatant connection I have with the topic of this study. Being an English Language Learner myself, I am fully aware that my experiential background on language learning influences the analysis and interpretation of the data collected. Consequently, I made the strategic decision of developing a reflective piece through which I engaged in the reflexive and retrospective process of recounting my own language learning experience. Through a series of anecdotal vignettes, I attempted to acknowledge my positionality and the way my experiences could potentially mirror the ones narrated by the participants. This conscientious effort was aimed at avoiding what Talmy (2010) signals as neglecting the role of the interviewer/researcher in co-constructing interview data. Admittedly, the memories I have regarding that time in my life established my empathy and understanding of the participants’ own language-learning stories of struggles, challenges, and success. I could empathize with their passion, sadness, frustration, joy and nostalgic discourse. There were other emotional reactions that I recognize were triggered by the participants’ stories of their struggles as ESL students, which mirrored the difficult times I had during my English learning process. Following Talmy’s (2010) advice, I constantly performed a

meta-analysis of my influence over the course of this study: before the interview, by carefully thinking about what, how, and when questions were asked (power). For this purpose, I carefully selected and re-arranged the questions from the preliminary set of interview questions (see appendix C) in a way that the interviews would simulate the flow of spontaneous conversations. For instance, I decided to carry out the first round of interviews with questions that were aimed at establishing trust, comfort, and rapport between the researcher and the participant. Questions such as “Where are you from originally?”, “Tell me about your early years of schooling,” and “What language do you use to communicate with your relatives, today?” were part of the preliminary interviews. Whereas, questions that could generate emotionally-ridden answers were included in subsequent interviews, at a time when the participants were more at ease with sharing information with myself as an interviewer and researcher. For the interviewing stage that Talmy (2010) designates as “during,” I enforced a “liberatory condition” which entails allowing the voice of the interviewees to be heard, listening carefully, and not interrupting (voice). The “after,” or final stage, was conducted with the understanding of how I was able to establish connections with the participants, and how my own experiences shaped the interpretations of the data.

My compilation of stories, memories, experiences, thoughts, and feelings I have related to my language-learning experience embody a thought-provoking process of self-appraisal allowing me to engage in reflexivity, which in turn led me to an understanding of my research positionality. In addition, it enabled me to internalize the nature of the study as a process, and not just a product, and a shared space (England, 2008), one that is shared with the participants as we co-constructed and negotiated meaning. The aforementioned compilation is presented in the narrative that follows.

Chapter 4

Intermission

“When you count money, do you count in English or Spanish?” “What language do you use on social media?” “Do you speak Spanish at home?” These are questions I am often asked due to my bicultural and multilingual background, and although I speak three languages, Spanish, English, and French—ranked in order of proficiency—not many people know I speak the latter, therefore I’m generally known as bilingual. This particular aspect of my identity has been a constant reminder of a time in my life when I felt constantly lost, excited, shocked, and amazed. At first, I considered this to be a mere phase, even a milestone; something fleeting and non-permanent that would eventually become a memory within the timeline of my life. However, it is a moment in time I keep going back to; a point of reference that has taken me through different emotional journeys but keeps me grounded at the same time. It is sort of hidden but ever present, resurfacing with every English word I utter or type. My English language learning experience is omnipresent and has influenced numerous aspects of my life, mostly my academic and professional path. Understanding the implications of living and experiencing language acquisition has led me to develop an interest in exploring it at a profound level, delineating a concrete research agenda in this field.

It all began when I was 12 years old and my parents decided to embark on a project that they considered would benefit my brother and I greatly. From an academic and professional standpoint, they strongly believed that being bilingual bears innumerable benefits for a successful career. More specifically, they viewed English as a winning ticket that opens many doors offering competitive advantage, prestige, and success in this day and age. In 1992, my family moved to the state of Pennsylvania and

my brother and I were enrolled in the local school district. I clearly remember how I was not able to sleep on the eve of our departure because I felt so anxious and excited at the same time. My expectations for this new chapter in our lives were high yet filled with mixed emotions. I feared what was waiting for me in this foreign country—a different school and a new home—but I looked forward to new beginnings. The prospect of making new friends who spoke another language and looked “different” was exciting, and yet I already felt like I missed my friends dearly.

Part of the excitement for this new chapter in my life was because I had already been in the United States. I have relatives who live in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and my family and I would travel often to visit during my childhood. I have happy and fond memories of these trips, visiting new places, having fun at theme parks and playing with my cousins. I always enjoyed the time we spent in states like Pennsylvania, Florida, and Maryland, and this created a positive image of the United States in my mind. Consequently, I had great expectations about our move and the new opportunities looming for me in the horizon.

Although I was very much excited about starting 8th grade in the United States, I remember feeling a bit self-conscious during my first week of school. I soon realized the anticipated language barrier was not as daunting as the much larger cultural barrier I was facing. The educational system in Venezuela is quite different, and thus, I was not only lost and confused because I could not understand what people were saying, but I could not figure out how things worked either. Routine tasks such as using a locker, riding the bus, or leaving the school in “waves” were new and unknown to me. I found myself struggling to navigate the school setting on any given day simply because all these social and academic protocols were new to me. I can only speculate that teachers and other staff

assumed that I was familiar with all of these procedures, like any other average American student, and instead focused on the language aspects of my school experience. Their top priority was to help me achieve proficiency in English as quickly as possible, and they gave little thought to other issues I might be encountering, such as the ones associated with basic school routines and tasks.

In Venezuela, students do not change classrooms, teachers do. Imagine my confusion when on the first day I felt pressed and rushed to go from one classroom to another every time the bell rang. I was perplexed by the fact that so many students were constantly walking up and down the halls. At the beginning of the school years, parents or guardians in Venezuela get a list of school supplies they need to buy for their children, which includes textbooks they will use in the upcoming academic year. That was not the case in my Pennsylvanian school. I was assigned a textbook on the first day of class and, because I was not familiar with this practice and did not get a word that was spoken in class, I walked out of the classroom leaving the book behind in the desk drawer. Later, I found out that I was supposed to take that book with me because it was for my own personal use for the entire school year. I could probably write an entire chapter on anecdotes similar to the ones previously mentioned that illustrate how my English-learning experience went far beyond language and academics.

The linguistic barrier is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the struggles and challenges one may experience as an ELL. As it will be illustrated in the following passages, culture plays a major role in the ELLs' language acquisition process, academic performance, and social interaction. Coming from a very different educational system, my first weeks as an 8th grade student in the U.S. were filled with anxiety and self-consciousness. I felt as though all students' eyes were on me because I did not know

where I was going or what I was doing. I kept going into the wrong classrooms even though I always had my schedule with me. I dreaded hearing the bell in my American school because it meant I had to figure out, yet again, where I needed to go.

The locker situation only compounded my daily struggles in the new academic environment. Venezuelan schools do not have storage lockers; students are expected to carry all their books, notebooks, and other school supplies in their backpacks all day long. Due to my previous familiarity with remaining in one classroom for the entire day, I had to drag my overstuffed backpack around the hallways for the first two weeks of school while I watched my American classmates carry much lighter loads, as I had not yet figured out how to work the locker I was assigned, even though it came with instructions (in English) for the lock. Eventually, I tried venturing out to the locker area and attempted to open my locker. The first time I tried using the locker, I felt extremely self-conscious and just froze. I looked sideways at the other students around me, and noticed how they gracefully opened and closed the lockers in one swift motion. It was mortifying and frustrating. I sought Mrs. K's help. She went to the lockers with me and showed me how to work the lock. She made me practice a few times but by the time I attempted to replicate the process the next morning, I had forgotten some or all the steps. I even pulled out the slip of paper where I had written the instructions in Spanish, followed them exactly as they were stated, and yet the lock would not budge. By then, I was so frustrated by my failed attempts that I decided to give up on the lockers. I tried again after a few weeks until I finally figured out how to effectively work the lock. It did not improve my English-language skills, it did not have any significant impact on my academic performance, and it certainly did not help me make any friends, but it provided

me with a newfound sense of confidence and the feeling that I could develop the socio-cultural competencies I needed to function in this new setting.

In Venezuela, I never took a bus to or from school. My mom, or my friend's mom—they carpooled—drove me to school; thus, I was not familiar with the school “bus wave” system in the U.S. Riding the bus to school was easy and uneventful because it only required me to be at the bus stop, across from my apartment building, at the specified time. Getting on the bus after school was the real challenge. During my first week of classes, my mother picked me up after school but I had to learn how to ride the bus back rather quickly because she was not able to pick me up shortly thereafter.

The following Monday, after my 8th period class, the bell rang and I left the classroom with many other students, and walked straight towards the school parking lot. I searched for Bus #94 to no avail. Bus #94 was nowhere to be found. I walked in circles around the school building but I could not find my bus anywhere. With dread, I noticed how the parking lot grew very quiet and all the buses were gone. There were no students or buses in sight. My first reaction was to walk towards the school's main entrance so I could keep looking for my bus, but I decided against it. Instead, I headed back to the school building and tried to get back to the classroom I was in. Feeling extremely self-conscious and embarrassed about being lost, I stopped in front of the classroom door, turned around, and headed to the east side of the cafeteria, where my locker was, thinking that it was a safe place to hide from everybody while I figured out what to do next. If anything, it gave me an excuse or a purpose because I could always pretend I needed to “get something” out of my locker. Eventually, I decided that my best option was to go to the administration office, request a phone call (cell phones were not an option in the 1990s) and ask my mother to pick me up. As I started walking towards the office, a

second bell went off and throngs of students came out of the classrooms bursting through the cafeteria doors. I was thrown off by what was happening, and I certainly did not understand why so many students were still in school—at this point I thought I was the only one left—but I decided to follow them. We all stepped out into the parking lot and, lo and behold, bus #94 was one of the eight buses parked right outside. Overwhelmed with relief, I happily jumped in and quickly found a seat. It was later that week that I learned through Mrs. K that the school had a “two-wave system,” which meant that school was let out in two waves: after 8th period, half of the student body left after the first bell rang, and the second half was released after the second bell. I was part of the second wave, and couldn’t find my bus because I mistakenly went out with the first wave.

These stories may seem to be trivial and irrelevant experiences, mainly because they are not specifically language-related, but they are the ones that keep resurfacing anytime I have to reflect on my own language-learning experience. I believe the cultural component makes these memories more salient among the ones related to the language-learning process. Throughout my teaching years, these anecdotes have become my signature stories to illustrate the challenges of navigating certain social settings and situations that can be unfamiliar and intimidating not only because you are still in the process of acquiring a new language, but because of cultural differences.

Alongside these cultural incidents, I started feeling anxious about the fact that I was not making any American friends. Most of the students I was interacting with were ESL students like me from countries such as Korea, Hungary, Taiwan, Indonesia, Puerto Rico, and Russia. In a way, this helped me with my confidence because I felt like we were all in the same boat. But on the other hand, it made me feel alienated and that I belonged to a group that was not supposed to interact with others that were not part of it.

I started wondering if I could ever transcend those social barriers; how do I fit in? How do I get out of my comfort zone and venture out? Would I be accepted? Would language, communication—or lack thereof—be an issue? I was trying to gather a holistic sense of the entire process. There were social, cultural, linguistic, and academic aspects to consider. I was juggling all of them at once and found myself successful in some, not so much in others.

By the time school session resumed after winter break, my homeroom and ESL teacher Mrs. K notified me that I was no longer attending her 1st period ESL class. When I first started, I had three periods of ESL classes a day: 1st, 2nd and 7th, and in January I started going to science class instead of ESL, during second period. In April, or right around Easter, Mrs. K told me that, once again, I had to drop one of her ESL classes and that I needed to go to Social Studies instead. Later, I understood that these changes were being made based on the progress I was making in terms of fluency and proficiency in English. When the school year came to an end, I was required to fill out an enrollment form for the following academic year. High school classes were held in a different building and, if I stayed in the USA, it was going to be my freshman year in high school (9th grade). As Mrs. K helped me filled out the form, I noticed that she had not selected any ESL classes for my schedule the following year. When I inquired about this, she told me that I would not need them: “You no longer require the ESL classes. You will start high school like a regular student.” I was being mainstreamed.

It turns out my family and I went back to Venezuela right after I finished 8th grade and I did not have the opportunity to enroll in high school in the United States. However, the fact that I was not going to be enrolled as an ESL student but as an average American student made me feel proud and accomplished, yet a bit uneasy. I would never know

what my freshman year would have been, or my entire high school experience in the U.S. for that matter, but I do have those vivid memories from the year I did study in the U.S. They are emblazoned in my mind as proof of all the challenges I overcame and how I managed to thrive despite all the cultural differences and the initial language limitations. Family support played a very important role during this time in my life. For instance, I remember a letter my father sent me written in English. My memory about it is rather fuzzy, but I even remember it was written in pencil and on a lined sheet of paper. In it, he wrote beautiful and encouraging words. He told me not to give up, to picture him going through the same thing when he took an intensive English program in order to pass the TOEFL test and enter the Master's Program at a university in Pennsylvania. He expressed his sympathy and understanding of not being able to fully comprehend instructions for an assignment, or to write the answers on homework papers. Somehow, I was able to understand every word he wrote even though my English fluency was still a work in progress. I may not have realized it at the time, but his letter was an invaluable motivator as I struggled with my academic endeavors.

When sharing some of my most memorable anecdotes from this experience, I am often asked what makes them salient and why they stand out the most and the answer is complex. First of all, I think they are memorable because they have implications that go beyond the linguistic ones, if anything they are mostly about problems or difficulties I had because of cultural differences. Secondly, the fact that I keep going back to these anecdotes for illustration purposes makes them easily retrievable and accessible in my mind, and thus, they have stood the test of time. The more I keep going back to them as example of my language learning experience, the more indelible they become. Lastly, I believe that these language-related experiences touched me in different emotional levels.

They made me feel lost, confused, helpless, self-conscious, and embarrassed among other things. Nevertheless, I considered them to be learning experiences that taught me how to be resilient and resourceful as I learned to navigate various socio-academic settings.

However, I also have numerous anecdotes from those days when English was still an unknown code, they are just not the first ones to resurface. For instance, I remember standing in front of a vending machine, dumbfounded by the complexity of this machine that was supposed to give me a soda in exchange for money, but I did not know how. An old man walked by and noticed my predicament. I assumed he tried to help me by giving me instructions on how to operate the machine but I just stood there staring at him unable to make out any of the words that came out of his mouth. At some point, I think he offered to get it for me but I just walked away, embarrassed and thirsty.

There were also the times when I struggled taking tests because I could not fully understand the prompt, the question, or the word problem and even though I was allowed to take it in Mrs. K's classroom and use my notes, it was still very confusing. Knowing that Mrs. K spoke Spanish, I would sometimes walk up to her and ask her to translate the test or the questions for me, but, more often than not, she was reluctant to do so. She claimed that I should not rely on her bilingualism, and that I needed to try to "figure it out" on my own first. I now understand that she was probably deterring me from using Spanish translation as a "crutch", although there are authors like Cummins (2009) who would disagree with this approach, arguing that the use of an ELLs' L1 should not be forbidden but rather encouraged.

In math class, which was one of the few classes I was mainstreamed from the beginning, I had a hard time understanding the teacher while she worked her way through a problem on the board. On the other hand, I also struggled when I tried to ask her

questions or tried to explain the ideas I had about anything. The go-to solution was to seek the help of one of my classmates, a boy from Spain, who usually served as an interpreter for my math teacher and me. The other classes I attended that were not ESL were easier to follow because there were more hands-on: art, music, PE, and home economics. These were subjects that required more “doing” and less reading, writing, and speaking so it was easier for me to accomplish tasks just by emulating what my teacher and classmates did. In PE if they ran, I ran. In art class, I drew, cut, colored, and modeled whatever was on the board or on my teacher’s desk. In music, I played the recorder and the guitar by watching how my teacher played those instruments, and in home economics I cooked, baked, and sewed accordingly.

Homework and assignments were also a bit of problem because I did not have Mrs. K’s help at home and my mother was unable to assist me because she wasn’t fluent in English, and although my father was rather proficient, he was in Venezuela working so he could support us here in the U.S. Consequently, I either turned in incomplete assignments, or I would wait for my ESL class with Mrs. K and ask for help.

As I listened to what my participants had to share about their language-learning experience, their words resonate with so much of what I have experienced through my own journey towards proficiency, academic achievement, and cultural adaptation. I firmly believe that this stage in my life plays a crucial role in my understanding, analysis, an interpretation of their process, since it has become the lens through which I am looking at their stories. It is also a frame of reference against which their stories are set, and thus, parallels are constantly and inevitably drawn. My roles as researcher, Hispanic woman, former ESL student, and teacher, converge to make meaning of the conglomerate

of stories, experiences, anecdotes, and memories shared by three individuals who have kindly trusted me to showcase them on the subsequent pages of this study.

Chapter 5

Lisa: Language is a Priority

The daughter of a migrant worker and a schoolteacher, Lisa is a second grade teacher at Rosewood Elementary. This is her fifth year teaching second grade full time. Even before our initial meeting, she enthusiastically agreed to participate in my study, offering to help out in any way she could. She was the first person to respond to the massive electronic communication sent out to recruit participants. She was born in the U.S, and in spite of the fact that her family moved back and forth between Mexico and the U.S., she claims to have been raised in Mexico and speaks Spanish as her first language. Her first years of schooling (mainly Kindergarten, and early elementary grades) were in Mexico, in a small town in the State of Jalisco. She eventually moved to the U.S. with her family and attended elementary and middle school in California. Then her family relocated to a state located in the Midwest where she attended high school. After obtaining her high school diploma, she enrolled in a state college to pursue her goal of a career in education, which she achieved by becoming a teacher at Rosewood Elementary.

Prior to coming to Rosewood Elementary, Lisa attended a local state college where she earned her degree in Elementary Education, and is currently pursuing a master's degree. She began her teaching career as a student teacher to fulfill graduation requirements, at a school chosen by the placement program. After graduation, she immediately started working as a second grade teacher in Rosewood Elementary. This is a magnet school that uses incentives to create desegregation by placing emphasis on providing free transportation to students, having a non-selective admission process, and a thematic curriculum or specific method of instruction (Hausman & Goldring, 2014). In

the case of Rosewood Magnet Elementary, the school offers parents the option of enrolling their children in the Dual Language Program, which imparts instruction in both English and Spanish. Lisa is one of two second grade Dual Language teachers, responsible for teaching Social Studies, Arts, and Science in Spanish. Rosewood Elementary is part of a school district in Northeast Kansas, with a large Hispanic community. The student body at Rosewood elementary is made up of approximately 530 students, 65% of which are considered minority, specifically of Hispanic descent.

Lisa's classroom is located within a roundabout of classrooms at the end of a hallway on the west side of the school, in which we carried out all the interviews sitting at students' desks. Her classroom is fully decorated with posters, signs, messages, students' work and other décor in both Spanish and English.

Of all the participants in this study, Lisa is the most vivacious. She is eloquent, energetic, enthusiastic, and fast-paced. However, her English-Language experience was gathered and composed by many false starts. Most of the details surrounding her language acquisition process escape her. There were multiple instances throughout our interviews and conversations in which she failed to bring back those memories that could enrich her accounts. Most of Lisa's stories focus on her childhood experiences at home and with her family, both in Mexico and in the U.S. Throughout various anecdotes and stories, she consistently referenced her family and they were often the focus of the story. The following excerpt illustrates how her narrative shifts from herself to another family member:

Because again at the beginning I didn't know anyone. And again, I'm at this big school and at that time where I was at a small community but it was a growing community and there was only... The public school system only had two

elementary schools, and then the middle school and the high school. In the two elementary schools, we're divided by grades. So the first elementary school would have kindergarten first, second, and third. And then, the other school had a fourth, fifth, and sixth and I was in the fourth grade. My sister was in third grade and we were at different schools. And my sister and I we were so close and we're still so close. And having that someone away from me, my closest person away from me for the first time was very hard. Because if we had been at the same school or at the same recess she would have been my support or now we're separated. My brother who was in first grade was also with her. (LS11-2, p. 7)

This passage denotes Lisa's tendency to deflect the recount of her experience to that of her siblings. This was a frequent occurrence throughout the interviews even in the instances when, prior to my prompting, she would bring back the course of the narrative to herself. Lisa would start telling me about her own feelings, memories and emotions, and eventually veered towards her siblings as shown in the following story:

So I'm here by myself both of them went to a different school, different part of town. They both got bused to school and I had to walk to my school. So I had no one, it was just me with all of these kids who I just didn't know. The first six weeks were very hard because they all knew each other, they had been in school before. I was the only one who was new to that classroom. And there were four classes, four fourth grade classes, and only one was bilingual. So all of these kids knew each other from the previous years because they were in the same one class. It took me a very long time to make friends because they all had their little groups and I was not part of a single group, that was very difficult for me. And my brother, and my sister they both had similar experiences even though they were in

the same school they never really saw each other because they had different lunch, different recess times, they never got to see each other.”

Only when they would either ride the bus to school or back home. My brother had a very, very sad time and it still very sad up to this time. He recalls one of those first days when he was in the playground and again he didn't have any friends he didn't know any one. And he didn't know that my sister had a different recess because he was so young and he... We all thought back in our school everyone has recess at the same time and you get to see everyone. But now it's by grade levels and he would spend his recess time walking around looking for his sister. Well, he never found her. He was never able to find her, he went back to his classroom, he got his backpack, and he sat down on the floor hugged his backpack and cried because that was the only thing that was familiar to him. And he's grown up now, he just graduated from college, I don't know how old he is, maybe 26, 27, and that's still a very emotional time for him. That's something that we have not... It's still a very traumatized time for us, for me, and that happened many, many, many, many years ago. (LS11-2, p. 8)

This ebb and flow of her narrative is reminiscent of Gilligan's (2015) contrapuntal voices. The author asserts that this third step from the “listening” guide analysis of qualitative data, entail listening to “melodies” within the narrative. The researcher listens to tensions, different voices, complementing or opposing threads, and strands or layers that may emerge from the interview. In most instances, the research questions based on the study's theoretical framework guide this listening part of the process. When I applied Gilligan's musical metaphor to these “family passages” of Lisa's interviews, I noticed how there were two independent melodic lines (voices) within her narrative: a main

voice, which represented her own (Lisa's stories), and another independent, yet secondary voice, as the "harmony", composed by her siblings' stories.

The strong presence of her siblings' stories in the accounts of her language-learning experience indicates strong family ties and Lisa's deep connection with her siblings. Furthermore, it casts a sense of collectiveness as a main characteristic of her language-learning experience memories. By including her siblings' experience and sharing their feelings in her accounts, she is expressing how the language-learning experience was a shared experience. Lisa considers the compilation of lessons, learning, feelings, emotions, and traumas as shared experiences. She doesn't seem to believe that she experienced them alone, but rather, with her siblings. Through her account it is noticeable how she feels that they went through this together and that it was a joint effort to overcome every obstacle through these moments of hardship.

And there I was standing at the door, I didn't know what to do, teachers walk me into my classroom, and I didn't know anyone. I didn't know anyone. At that time, I was placed in a bilingual classroom, so that helped, but I didn't understand half of what the teacher was saying, and I had no friends. And at the end of the day, mom came back to pick me up and we walked home, but it was a very hard experience for all of us. Very hard. (LS10-1, p. 3)

I see my daughter, she's in the fourth grade, and that's how old I was and that's just a trauma that I have not been able to overcome. I still even remember that time when we left our house to come to the U.S., and that's something that I just... It's a very strong, strong, strong feeling. (LS11-2, p. 8)

Lisa's closing line on the first excerpt, "...it was a very hard experience for all of us. Very hard," (LS11-2, p. 8) is a theme that underlies the emotional aspect of her

language-learning experience in most of her stories and foreshadows subsequent ones. She clearly identifies language learning as the primary source of her confusion and sense of loss. Moreover, she also expresses that the uprooting affected the whole experience at a very deep emotional level.

Another determining factor impacting Lisa's language-learning experience is attitudes and perceptions the community had about her and her family. Through this following excerpt, Lisa shares her feelings and thoughts on this matter:

The thing that we noticed was that outside of the classroom, Spanish was not encouraged. So you were looked down upon if you spoke Spanish. So students would try to learn English just as fast, as much as they could, and then try not to use Spanish. It was almost like they were ashamed of speaking the language. And when we moved to the Midwest, that was the big contrast that I saw. Other Spanish-speaking students were very proud, and they were not ashamed of speaking the language inside those schools. That was one of my biggest, I don't know, experiences or differences...I guess, the community as a whole. I remember we went to the store, and again it was a very small town, people would look at you if you spoke Spanish, if you were not speaking English. They never... No one ever said anything mean to us that I can remember, but you could just tell the... See their look in their face. (LS10-1, p. 5)

The aftermath of this experience, along with the influence of her parents, has instilled in Lisa a strong sense of ownership of her native language. Spanish is highly valued and treasured by Lisa. The effects of this zealous attitude towards it, along with her heritage, has clearly impacted her teaching practices as shared here when discussing her current students:

I encourage them to use their Spanish and we do a lot of sentence frames, or sentence starters because I want them to use their Spanish. And I think it'll come with time as long as I just keep on reminding them. And I am very proud of speaking Spanish. I'm not ashamed. And I think that it's very important to have those role models, because if I was also using more English than Spanish, they would be doing it too. So I try... I obviously speak Spanish, I should be speaking Spanish, and I'm not ashamed of speaking it, and I do not... In my other school, you would go out to the hallway, and if other teachers saw you speaking Spanish, they will look at you weird. At Rosewood, it's all over the school. It's the same culture, so no one looks down upon you. Parents are used to it, students are used to it, everyone's used to it. (LS10-1, p. 14)

Lisa's pride in her Mexican heritage and her use of the Spanish language has permeated her teaching strategies and heavily influenced her teaching philosophy as well. This is an illustrative example of how personal practical knowledge (PPK) operates in classroom dynamics. According to Clandinin (1985) personal practical knowledge is "... knowledge which is imbued with all the experiences that make up a person's being," (p. 362) with the understanding that the nature of these experiences can be both personal and professional. Lisa's set of experiences based on language use discrimination are part of the personal dimension of her PPK, and they constitute a body of knowledge which stems from circumstances, actions, and undergoings that have affective content for the individual. The "knowledge" dimension is defined as "the body of convictions, conscious or unconscious, which have arisen from experience, intimate, social, and traditional, and which are expressed in a person's actions. The actions in question are all those acts that make up the practice of teaching including its planning and evaluation" (Clandinin, 1985,

p. 362). From this definition and explanation of how the personal dimension of PPK acts upon teacher planning and instruction, emerges an understanding of Lisa's determination on underscoring the use and importance of Spanish in her classroom. Although this emphasis on the use and cultural capital of Spanish is due to her job as a Spanish dual language teacher, it can be argued that it is also a direct consequence of her PPK, since it transcends the classroom setting into other areas of her life (such as motherhood), as portrayed in the following passage:

That's their native language. Because I realize that as parents, if it was their choice, they would probably go with English right now. Because that's what they hear at school and that's what they hear when they watch their shows, their music, but if I let that go through, they will not speak the language. I'm not forcing them, but that's what we speak at home. That's what I speak, that's what my husband speaks at home with them. And that was their first, their native language. And we made a conscious decision, when they were born, that that's what we would speak at home. We do have relatives who have children, who parents do not speak English, but as their kids grow up, they are losing their Spanish, because they're doing more of the English, and then now they don't know how to communicate with their relatives. And to me, that's just not okay... And I do not want them to be ashamed of the language. I do not want them to be ashamed of their heritage, or their culture. I want them to be proud, and just... I don't want that to be a burden, or I don't want that to be something negative in their lives. (LS10-1, p. 8)

It is also evident that her use of Spanish in class transcends her duties of merely teaching science, social studies, and art in Spanish. If it were the case, she would limit herself to teaching those subject areas in Spanish without any additional endeavors.

However, she constantly makes a conscientious effort of including multiple aspects and elements of Latin-American culture (mostly Mexican) to foster an atmosphere of pride in the students' heritage. Part of Lisa's teaching goals is that students feel that they can relate to the content of the class. She motivates students to establish connections between the class and their home life:

If we're doing that sound, if I can think of a character, like... I can't remember now, but there are characters that tie with their phonics skill, I'll say it because they know it. We were doing letter Ñ, so I said "Ñoño". They know who that is. They hear those things. I try... When we were talking about food, why only focus on pizza and hamburgers? Tacos, and I talked about The Taco Truck. Those are things that they know. I talk about piñatas. Those are things that they see at home, that they know about. (LS10-1, p. 15)

In this sense Lisa is not only making her classroom more inclusive and culturally relevant for ELLs whose native language is Spanish, but she is also gravitating towards a critical pedagogy approach. This could be the aftermath of the circumstances which surrounded her language-learning experience. Just as the experience of linguistic discrimination (Rannut, Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1994; Tsuda, 2008) impacted the personal domain of Lisa's PPK, it also appears to have influenced the praxis dimension of critical pedagogy as explained by Bercaw & Stooksberry (2004). This foundational dimension of critical pedagogy, as explained in the literature review section of this study, encompasses a reflection of the individual's culture or lived experience and a subsequent application of that reflection to language acquisition and the world in order to transform it (Schussler, Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2008). Lisa's praxis has been shaped by reflecting on her language-learning experience and how it has influenced her decisions of including

culturally relevant material to her lessons. In addition, she's striving for students to develop an implicit notion of the effects of language and power by encouraging the use of Spanish and underscoring the importance and value of the Hispanic culture despite the high prestige invested upon the English language. In doing so, Lisa is addressing the power differential of English-Spanish, and yet, she is constantly building a case for Spanish despite linguistic oppression. These efforts are akin to Akbari's study (2008) in which he purports raising students' awareness of issues faced by marginalized groups by encouraging the use of the learner's first language, and one of Sadeghi's (2008) three approaches to Critical Pedagogy through which students connect language and content with their own lives in engaged dialogues.

Lisa's critical pedagogy approach in teaching is also evidenced when she affirms: So, we all see this trend of Hispanic students dropping out or not continuing their studies after high school. And I thought that I wanted to do something to change that, but I haven't really done anything. Right now, my focus is with my class, my students, my elementary students. And I don't know, I think that's like a long-term goal. (LS05-3, p. 5)

This statement illustrates one of Critical Pedagogy's foundational goals of social transformation through education for a more democratic society (Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004). This is partially achieved when three main conditions are met: (a) each voice is shared and heard in an equal way, (b) critical examination of self and society, and (c) acting upon diminishing social injustices. In retrospect, Lisa analyzes her own language-learning experience, reflects on the obstacles she faced, and acknowledges that she may have fallen victim of the negative stereotypes that surround Hispanic students in academic settings: drop-outs, teen pregnancy, low test scores, underperforming,

overrepresentation in Special Education. In doing so, she examines herself, her experiences, and the views of society towards her and individuals that share her cultural and linguistic background. As a result, she decides to exert agency and take action towards diminishing the incidence and effects of stereotype threat, as a type of social injustice, by deciding to become a teacher and make a difference: "...do something to change that" (DS05-3, p. 10).

In spite of Lisa's efforts of an emphasis on Spanish's language value and its use, she acknowledges the advantages of bilingualism and she expressed how her own language-learning experience taught how proficiency in English can be a highly valued cultural and linguistic asset:

I think it's very important. I think it's very important, and specially being on this setting, in a dual-language classroom. I think it's important for both, for everyone. Whenever I see students struggling, I remind them that I know, because I went through the same thing. And many of them don't believe that I was young one time, and that I actually had to learn English. So, I tell them, 'I know that you're learning Spanish and this could be really, really hard. But I went through it and I learned.' So, I think it's very important for everyone to learn that second language. And I know it's hard, but I think it's very, very... It's something very important for everyone. (LS05-3, p. 5)

As far as the influence her language-learning experience has on her current teaching approach, Lisa claims she is not able to establish any clear connections, at least not on the academic level, but rather on a personal one. In essence, it has certainly contributed to the way she is able to empathize with ELLs in her classroom and at the school. This can be considered an outcome of coda, the structural element that returns the

teller's perspective to the present (Labov, 2008). In returning to the present, the narrator can reveal connections she makes between past and present. Within these two excerpts specifically, Lisa reveals the connections, or lack thereof, she makes between her language-learning experience and her teaching practice with native speakers and ELLs from an academic and personal perspective:

a) Academic:

When I'm planning my lessons, I'm not sure if I think about those things because again, I'm only doing Spanish and I'm always trying to find ways...again...I said a lot of visuals, things that I know would help the other side. But things that will help everyone really because we're doing a lot of... It's all about content. It's not about the language it's all about the content and we're doing science or social studies. It's going to be new for everyone, not just for half of the class. It's a lot of language building, but again with everyone because all of the things that we are doing are content-based...I'm not sure if I have ever made that connection. (LS11-2, p. 15)

b) Personal:

This year there was a family from Mexico who just moved, and not to my classroom but there are three siblings at different grade levels. And when I knew about this new kid in fourth grade, I just had flashbacks. I just had flashbacks and I thought, 'Oh, my goodness.' And I just thought of all these things that this kid could be thinking, all of these things he could be going through.... Because I know how hard it was. And I make sure that I say hi whenever I see him and we have very short brief conversations as I asked about his day, about different things. And he gets very, at least in my eyes, he gets very happy when he sees me.

I'm not sure if that's the case. And I just again, I had all those flashbacks from when I was going through the same things and I wanted to just kind of hug him and protect him and let nothing bad happen to that poor child. (LS11-2, p. 14)

Another powerful theme that emerged from Lisa's story is one that can be explained by the phenomenon of stereotype threat. Steele and Aronson (1995) coined this term to describe the condition under which certain minority groups (African Americans, Hispanics, and Women) are at risk of conforming to the negative stereotypes created about them, especially about their academic performance. When made aware of their race, ethnicity, or gender, individuals have shown a tendency to underperform in various academic environments, especially under pressure (e.g., tests). In most cases, victims of stereotype threat reinforce the stereotypes built around their intellectual ability, falling trap of a self-fulfilling prophecy. The following assertions shared by Lisa demonstrate how stereotype threat not only affects the academic performance of an individual but also their motivation toward academic endeavors:

I'll be very honest...my high school years in... And, they were here in the Midwest were my worst years. Again, going back to how my parents raised us, very high expectations, and grade school was great... My average scores were very good, middle school were the same and then, we moved to Mexico. Expectations were still there and my scores when we went back to Mexico, my middle school, they were the lower but I knew that I was trying and things were not as easy as they were before. And that was ok with my parents because they saw a lot of effort. When we came back to the U.S. and when I was in high school, I was very disengaged. I felt like teachers didn't care about how I was doing. I kind of felt like everyone had given up on me. I mean... that's how I felt,

and there were many times where I just felt like there was no point in doing the assignments. [emphasis added].

I don't know. I don't know. Maybe I had a secret label. Maybe some teachers thought that I would... I mean I would maybe follow some statistics that would say that I wouldn't graduate and there was maybe no hope for me. [chuckle] I mean this is my opinion, I could be wrong, but many of them thought that probably I wouldn't make it, because that's what the statistics would be showing, that I wouldn't make it. That's my guess, I don't know. (LS11-2, p. 5)

Although Lisa is unaware of the reasons why her teachers were unsupportive and had low expectations for her, stereotype threat can potentially explain the teachers' attitudes towards her as expressed in the preceding passages. Lisa considers the possibility that she was ignored or dismissed because of the stereotypes and the low academic success rates associated with her ethnicity. Other possible explanations include her emerging bilingualism and her status of "newcomer" in the neighborhood and the school, which are also facts associated with being a minority. While she cannot confirm this, any or all of these assumptions, could have contributed to the development of the stereotype threat she experienced during her high school years. Fortunately, she managed to overcome this and other obstacles, as she eventually earned her high school diploma, and later pursued a bachelor's degree in education. These accomplishments are remarkable examples of not only Lisa's resilience and determination, but also of the unwavering family support she received during her English language-learning experience and adaptation to a new country and a new culture:

And I will be very honest. The reason why I graduated and I went all the way through College just because of my mom. She was the one. Mom and dad. Other

than that, there was no one.

I cannot say that a teacher supported me...(LS11-2, p. 5) and my parents were very, very, very, supportive. Very supportive. (LS11-2, p.7)

Interestingly, Lisa's narrative was often filled with hesitations, false starts, and gaps in most of her accounts. In multiple occasions, her answers to some of the questions that required her to retrieve memories from the time in her life when she was learning English, and navigate socio-cultural settings in academics, would be vague and incomplete. For instance, when asked about her language-learning experience in high school, which she later confessed to having been the most difficult one, her answers were unclear and hazy. I composed a word image to portray this blurred passage of our conversation:

I'm not sure if I was also ESL. I don't know

I can't remember. I can't remember. I don't know

I am not really sure. I remember that my last semester, I was not ESL anymore

I don't know how that happened. I can't remember. I can't remember if I took a test or not.

I can't recall that. I don't know.

I can't remember that we took one but I can't remember anything else.

Although it appears to be a string of isolated sentences, they are part of Lisa's responses to questions I asked about her English-language learning experience in high school, her accommodations, and other related topics to which she provided statements akin to the ones cited above. It can be argued that she legitimately cannot retrieve these memories, and it may be so. She may not honestly remember certain details and events that pertain to that part of her life, however, this erasure may derive from a defense

mechanism set forth in order to block painful memories of a traumatic time in her life. Or, on the contrary, it may be that the memories associated with the actual learning of the English language are not relevant enough, and thus, they have been easily forgotten. As previously stated, she claims that her language acquisition process was fairly simple, as she doesn't recall having any major issues learning English. On the other hand, those anecdotes and experiences charged with emotions and trauma caused by the uprooting, seem to be the ones vividly emblazoned in her mind, and therefore, easier to retrieve. I was able to arrive to these conclusions based on the numerous times she shared how painful those years were for her and her family. Therefore, it is plausible to propose a theory through which her memory lapses can be justified by selective retrieval.

Of particular interest is the contrast displayed by juxtaposing Lisa's memory accounts of her high school experience vis-à-vis to the elementary and middle school ones. When asked about her English language-learning experience in the early years of her K-12 education, Lisa seems to retrieve those memories with ease and less effort. I ascribed this divergent process of recollection to two determining factors: (a) it seems as though in Lisa's case, the more pleasant the experience is, the easier it is for her to retrieve the related memories with accuracy and minimum effort; and (b) the fact that, in contrast to her high school academic experience, her middle school instruction was in a bilingual setting. This would confirm and reinforce the claimed benefits of bilingual programs for ELLs (August, Shanahan & Escamilla, 2009; García & Kleifgen, 2010; Cummins, 2009). The other contrastive and noticeable difference between Lisa's accounts of her high school and middle school experience versus the elementary ones is the perceptions she has towards them. For the former she has mainly negative feelings and memories, whereas the latter seemed to be more pleasant and positive. It can be

argued that the positive memories associated with the experience in elementary school may be attributed to the fact that she was part of a bilingual program where she felt that her native language (Spanish) was welcomed. She also felt comfortable and at ease in this bilingual environment and claims that she could easily relate to the teacher and her peers, since they were all Hispanics. As evidenced in the statements below, Lisa has fond memories of her time spent in a bilingual school:

...I had friends, all of my teachers were awesome... Well fourth, fifth, and sixth, all three of those grades were in the bilingual classroom. So I think that that gave me the support that I needed. All of the other students in my classroom were just like me. The purpose was for us to learn English, while learning the content... I think that in elementary the environment was very friendly. My teacher was a Hispanic teacher and she was fluent in both languages. I had friends, all of my friends were just like me. And it was not... I can't remember, it was not like dual language now, it was in a bilingual frame that we were all learning English. So we were all Hispanics learning English and that made me feel very, very comfortable. (LS10-1, p. 6)

In contrast, the ESOL services provided to Lisa in high school were those of a “pull out” or English-only period, where ELLs are taken to a separate classroom to learn English and are later mainstreamed as they become proficient. However, Lisa had already become fluent English and had only requested to be placed in the ESL classroom so she could be with her friends. Thus, this language-learning environment made her feel unchallenged, bored, and unmotivated. In addition to this, the teachers’ lack of support and attention during her high school years exacerbated her discomfort affecting her motivation and academic performance. These influential factors account for the negative

memories Lisa has of her high school years:

My high school years in... And, they were here... were my worst years. (LS11-2, p. 5)

In the ESL classroom, it was only about learning the language. That was the only thing. And I did not find it beneficial for me, because we already... I already had that foundation, whereas the things that we were doing were geared more to the students who were just coming in. And it was my fault, I was the one who asked to stay. (LS10-1, p. 6)

Furthermore, it is noteworthy to observe that most of the negative memories and feelings Lisa associates with her language-learning experience are of emotional and social nature. Lisa acknowledges that the actual process of acquiring the language was not as traumatic or emotionally taxing compared to the feelings and emotions derived from the uprooting, isolation, and the culture shock she felt when she first arrived:

When we came here to the U.S. I was in fourth grade. It was not hard to learn the language, but the change was very hard. The change was very hard and I was very young, so it was easy to learn, but the emotional piece was very abrupt for me at that time. And when we came here to the Midwest it was a lot of remembering, because we went back to Mexico and then we came back here again to the U.S. I don't think learning the language... I can't remember that being hard or difficult. I just remember a lot of emotion to it, because of everything else that goes on when someone moves to a new place. (LS05-3, p. 2)

So I can't remember those first experiences, I honestly can't. But I guess that I slowly picked it up [English] because I remember that I would always be doing fine. I can't recall a bad experience. (LS10-1, p. 6)

As Lisa composed the stories of her language-learning experience, she prioritized the emotional aspect of learning English as an ELL over the actual language acquisition process. She frequently underscored how emotionally taxing it was for her to push through those initial years in the U.S., and they have decidedly been the most influential on her current teaching practices. They have provided her with a stronger sense of pride of her roots and her heritage, and they have compelled her to become the kind of teacher who cares for and nurture her students in a teaching environment where they can feel safe, respected, and accepted.

Chapter 6

Dario: Education is a Priority

Dario is a social studies and ESL teacher in the rural Peony School District. Peony High School had a total student enrollment of 1,186 students for the 2015-2016 academic year. The student body is evenly distributed between a 48% of Caucasian students and a 43% of Hispanic students, the remainder is represented by other minority groups such as Asian, American Indian, and multiethnic. 28% of the students are classified as ESOL.

Dario has taught several different classes at Peony High School such as Geography, ESL, Social Studies, World History, among others for the past twelve years. Dario was also contacted through the massive e-mail communication sent out to recruit participants for this study. When I met with him personally, he told me that the topic of my research had piqued his interest and that he was willing to participate. Each of my interviews with Dario began with us seated at student desks in his classroom located towards the end of a long corridor, east side of the school building.

Reserved, taciturn, yet poignant and bold, Dario represented an interesting challenge from the very first time we met. Besides having to sharpen my interview skills, this participant also prompted me to delve into the task of analyzing what is left unsaid. Whereas Lisa made me reevaluate, calibrate, and adjust my interview strategies in order to help her navigate her lapses in memory, Dario challenged my interview skills in a different way. Being a man of few words, I had to improvise ways in which I could elicit more elaborate answers from him. In addition, I realized that I had to be carefully attentive to body language, facial expression, gestures, and other non-verbal cues that could complement what was being said. This proved to be extremely helpful later on

during the data analysis of his interviews at a later stage of the research.

To this end, I paid special attention to Dario's occasional chuckles and "nervous" laughs which he frequently used as taglines to some of his statements. Seidman (2013) explains that often times a participant will laugh as a logical response to something funny or amusing. In other instances, however, the meaning of this laughter may be nervous, ironic, or unclear, in which case it is worth careful examination and analysis. This entailed going beyond the expected task of listening to what words were being uttered, to how they were uttered. When listening to the recorded interviews while reading along the transcripts, I paid greater attention to the nuances of the speech: the intonation, the pauses and sighs, the hesitations, the false starts, and laughter. All these verbal and non-verbal cues carry connotations that significantly impact the way data is analyzed and interpreted. From joy, to anger, to sadness, there is powerful meaning within these nuances in speech. As Studs Terkel stated in an interview, "A laugh can be a cry of pain, and a silence can be a shout" (2015).

Dario's language-learning experiences took place during his high school years when he and his family moved to the U.S. in 1994. When Dario first arrived to the U.S., he was enrolled in 10th grade at a Midwestern high school located in a city with a highly diverse population. Being born and raised in Mexico, his native language is Spanish and was classified as an ESL/"at risk" student upon enrollment. His English-language learning experience can be described as one of challenges and growth. The following excerpts denote how Dario's adolescent language-learning stories are grounded in his need for success and academic achievement. This seems to be such an overarching theme for him that it is likely one that is part of his other childhood learning narratives as well. In any event, it clearly guides his teaching practice with both ELLs and other students in

his classroom, as expressed through the following:

It was good most of the time. I became sort of like the teacher's pet, a lot of the times, and I guess, that was more because, like I said before, I really wanted to learn and that made a difference as to how those teachers treated me and how I treated them. Some of my classmates really did not care about the class, so they chose to be on the wrong side of the teacher. That was bad. But then, I always listen. I always did the work. Sometimes, I even talked to them after class. For the first few weeks, especially the ones who spoke Spanish, the teacher that spoke Spanish...I ask questions. I take pride on that. And several people have actually told me, like former classmates have told me that I always ask questions. (DS05-3, p. 2)

As a teacher, I would like my students to be more aware of the opportunities they have out there if they have an education. Some of our students come from family settings where they have been provided with everything and they don't really see a need for getting a degree some day. (DS05-3, p. 5)

So, that's my major concern for them. I mean, for them to see the opportunities that are out there for them, regardless of their motivation, but then regardless of their level of academic skills. It could be in whatever subject they want into the career they want, if they really pay attention and do the actual work. You don't have to be really smart. You don't have to be super clever. All you have to do is do the work, graduate, and find a job, 'cause we all know that once you graduate, the actual knowledge comes with experience. (DS05-3, p. 6)

When examining these statements, I noticed a clear connection between what Dario experienced during his schooling and how those experiences have influenced the

expectations he has for his students. Having been a dedicated student in Mexico and then in the U.S., in spite of the linguistic and social challenges brought by relocating, he expects his current students to also rise to the occasion and overcome any obstacles in their way. This notion can be further explained by drawing on the theoretical concept of personal practical knowledge. Clandinin (1985) defines personal practical knowledge as “... knowledge, which is imbued with all the experiences that make up a person's being. Its meaning is derived from, and understood in terms of, a person's experiential history, both professional and personal” (p. 362). In this sense, Dario’s views on academic performance are heavily influenced by his own academic and personal story and the attitudes he had towards school. He is an individual who has high regards for education and the opportunities a degree may bring to someone’s life, coupled with is his positive attitude toward language learning and toward the English language itself. He believes knowing another language, English in particular, is a cultural asset and a competitive advantage. Through his stories I gathered that as student, and a language learner, he is a high achiever or, potentially, an overachiever. He sets high standards for his own learning and rises to the challenge if there is one. As a result, he underscores the importance of school and academic work quite frequently teaching practices.

Not only is Dario a strong advocate for education and students’ academic success, but he’s also the kind of teacher who puts emphasis on the rigorous aspect of schooling, in a very conservative and traditional way:

Some of these kids are in this class because they need to graduate. In the ESL class, I mean, by making World History, American History and Junior English are requirement for graduation, by then in this class, they're being accommodated through a watered down program, which I tend not to make it very low level as

well. That's one of the struggles too, when it comes to discipline. Some of the kids have had teachers who give them answers, who give them grades and I don't give them that. They have to earn every grade in this class. That's one of the major challenges and then my middle name becomes 'mean.' [laughter] (DS11-2, p. 13)

Well, one of them will be a test. [chuckle] A lot of our students struggle with taking tests, and I know you can do different things to assess using non-traditional assessment tools. A test paper and pencil test is a very traditional one we know. But then, what I see there is, they need to get used to the real world out there. So, if I give them a different tool, it will help them with their knowledge, which I do during the formative assessment, but then during the summative, you still have to take that one for their life experience when they go out to the real world, that's how the real regular classes are like out there. (DS11-2, p. 13)

Notwithstanding, the strictness of his teaching philosophy and strong focus on academic, does not keep Dario from acknowledging the goals and motivation that some of these students have, which in some cases, are not aligned with his own views on education. In those instances, Dario is candid when he shares his thoughts on the matter:

And I'm sorry, I have to say this, even it's going to be recorded. A few months ago, I started telling them: 'Whatever you need to do in life, graduate first. If you are thinking of becoming a drug dealer, pay special attention in chemistry.' So, that was my bad advice. But then, it kind of makes sense. And that reminds me why I was telling them that, because a former student of mine had to be deported a while ago. But then, the good thing he did is that he actually graduated from high school. Now, when he went back to his country, he actually asked for his paperwork from the United States, stating that he had graduated high school and

now he... I mean, that worked for him. He started a career over there. He graduated. (DS05-3, p. 6)

By paraphrasing and, perhaps, making some inferences about this anecdote, my interpretation was that Dario implied that even if the student did not actually graduate, at least he has the basic knowledge and skills to succeed in life regardless of the occupation chosen. Even though some may consider the example given to be crude and inappropriate, Dario's goal was to convey a message about the importance that knowledge has in the life of any person. Even then, he circumvents and comes back to the main idea of graduating and earning a degree: in dire circumstances, it can be the winning ticket, a door to new beginnings, or a way out.

From a critical pedagogy standpoint, the aforementioned statements also carry noteworthy connotations in relation to this pedagogical approach. At its core, critical pedagogy is mainly oriented toward classroom practices with an emphasis to learning that transcends the classroom setting and reaches out to the community. In sensu stricto, Dario manifests his concerns for students' future, whether academic or not, and does takes into account their lives beyond the classroom to inform his instructional decisions and understand their behavior:

Especially, well, I was talking about the beginner ELLs. Some of them don't always come prepared. They have rough days, especially since it's the beginning of the day, they probably did not have breakfast, they probably woke up late, they probably have family situations that they deal with and their performance is affected with all of those factors. And therefore, they become very unpredictable when it comes to actually doing the work and finding the motivation and actually wanting to acquire the second language. (DS05-3, p. 6)

In a broader sense, I was not able to identify a critical pedagogy approach to his teaching, especially in relation to language learning. A language acquisition process framed within the foundations of a critical pedagogy approach allows learners to actively question the realities of the world they are immersed in (Freire, 1970), becoming agents of social transformation. Instead, his language-teaching approach seemed to be based on the method of grammar-translation (Richards & Rodgers, 2014) which focuses on teaching grammar and practicing translation with a high priority on learning vocabulary and the construction of sentences. Through both interviews and classroom observations, Dario exhibited a preference for this teaching method mainly due to his own language learning experience as he asserts in the following statements:

I learned this by finding the words in context and I was doing lists of new words. But then, I realized that... I mean, we don't learn that way. We're not just given lists of the words when we're little and we have to learn them. So, the natural way of learning new words is by reading stories and actually finding the words in context. That really helps. Let's say, you're talking about insects and then you find the word wing or eye, for the part of the body, but then you just find eye, if you are really into learning the language, you're gonna go back yourself and actually learn more new words that deal with parts of the body. But then, the actual teaching by the teacher or instructions by the teacher, is to read that story and learn the context of the story, and how the word was used in that story. (DS05-3, p. 6)

Yeah, sight translation. So, they've learned a great deal. And some of these kids, especially two or three of them, are really into... They learn a lot, especially... As to how to pronounce most of the words. There will be a few words which they

cannot say yet, but then they practice. (DS05-3, p. 7)

On more than anything is just Google Translate, that really helps. Most of the time, I mean it's not 100% of the time, 'cause Google Translate does have some limitations. But then, that has been my best tool that I can use most of the time for him to understand and find new words and things like that. I mean now, occasionally I will have my students use Duolingo and luckily, there is a Vietnamese version for Duolingo. So, that really helps, too. (DS05-3, p. 5)

Within a critical pedagogy approach to language teaching, language is equated with ideology and power (Akbari, 2008), and creates a space for exploring the cultural, social, and political dynamics of language use beyond the classroom setting. Dario does not only associate language teaching and learning with power, but the overall concept of education. When asked about his teaching philosophy, Dario explicitly mentioned power as one of the direct benefits of knowledge:

My teaching philosophy is more about we're here and we have to learn, and learning gives you power. Once you have power you know what to do in the world out there. Knowledge helps you in the world nowadays. It gives you power. (DS11-2, p. 10)

However, through the analysis of interview transcripts, and field notes based on classroom observations, I was not able to observe particular instances in which this was directly or indirectly addressed in relation to language. Dario's views on the notion of power seem to be only in relation to education in general and not to the praxis of language teaching. This idea was further supported by the fact that, through various statements regarding his approach to language teaching, he provided examples of tasks and activities, representative of a typical grammar-translation method of language

teaching. I compiled below a sample of such activities in the form of a word image:

Bilingual sites for looking up words

I've spent most of the semester giving my students different stories

I would read to them several times

It's called sight translation

They see the text in English and in Spanish

I went over the parts of speech

They are required to read it to me in English

They practice pronunciation

They also have to read it in Spanish

Nonetheless, this does not downplay the impact that learning another language may have in someone's life as evidenced in the following statement, where Dario reflects on his own language-learning experience, and what becoming proficient in English meant for him:

It meant becoming a different person than the one you came as... It means acquiring new perspectives as a citizen of the world, I suppose. Comparing situations in both languages and how some of the things don't really transfer and some of the other ones transfer really easily, but then just without even noticing it, you are becoming a bicultural person, a bilingual, bicultural individual. (DS05-3, p. 1)

The preceding reflection demonstrates Dario's awareness of the linguistic, cognitive, and cultural advantages of bilingualism, and his attempts at developing critical consciousness towards language teaching and learning. At this point, I speculate that Dario is progressively taking strides toward a critical pedagogy approach to language

teaching. He seems familiar with the notion of critical pedagogy, though unconsciously, and has reflected on the advantages of both education and bilingualism, which he has shared with his students. At this point, it is only a matter of “connecting the dots” and officially committing to an extensive application. When acknowledging that critical pedagogy sets classroom content and dynamics within the wider social context with the belief that what happens in the classroom should end up making a difference outside the classroom (Baynham, 2006), Dario’s journey towards a critical pedagogy for English language teaching becomes more feasible. This is evidenced in the previously cited passage in which Dario talks to his students about the benefits of having a high school degree: “Whatever you need to do in life, graduate first” (DS05-3, p. 6). This statement affirms the critical pedagogy notion of prioritizing the need for transforming societies through education (Akbari, 2008), especially the lives of those who have been historically marginalized.

One final theme of Dario’s personal narrative was particularly salient during the third step of Gilligan’s listening guide. There was a notorious and stark contrast between two main “strands,” “melodies,” and “tones,” on Dario’s accounts, reflections, and evaluations of his English language-learning experience. On the one hand, he admitted to feelings of concern, isolation, withdrawal, and also experiencing a lack of confidence in his academic skills. In some other passages, Dario describes his language-learning experience as one that was positive, educational, and simply put, “great,” as simultaneously reminisces and ponders its benefits over the hardship of the early stages. These opposing lines of thought may be ascribed to the phasic nature of the language acquisition process, which, may be tantamount to starting a business or embarking on a new project: most individuals are bound to a rough start before success eventually comes.

The following is a sample of some of Dario's dissonant strands, which stemmed from his contrapuntal discourse regarding his language-learning experience. I used the AB format to label and set up in contrast the positive (A) and the negative (B), replicating the analytical technique I employed with Lisa's dichotomous remembering/non-remembering theme:

a) Positive Statements associated with the language-learning experience:

It had some good things to it

I could understand the text very well

I was very motivated by just being there and that made a difference

Most teachers care for the students and that really made a difference for me too

It was a great experience

Before you know it, you understand.

It was good most of the time

I really did well

b) Negative Statements associated with the language-learning experience:

That was a huge cultural shock

"What's going on?" "What's going on here?"

I wasn't very confident

It made me feel bad (being labeled "at risk")

One of the major challenges for me was being lonely. I felt lonely. I had no real friends

It was tiring

"Am I actually going to learn English?" It seems really difficult." I don't

understand anything.

I was really quiet. I became really quiet when I came to the U.S.A. I wasn't quiet before. I was pretty social, I would say.

The juxtaposition of these statements underscore a process of retrospection through which Dario acknowledges the hardship, challenges, and obstacles he had to overcome to become proficient in English and succeed academically. Yet, his discourse changes when in hindsight, he recounts the benefits and advantages that the language-learning experience brought upon his personal and professional life. For a better understanding of the implications of this dissonance in Dario's narrative, Gilligan (2015) explains, "Listening for at least two contrapuntal voices takes into account that the person expresses his or her experience in a multiplicity of voices" (p. 165). Based on this premise, the counterpoint between Dario's two voices denotes a process of reflection and acknowledgement, and to some extent, the objectivity and pragmatism to discern among the "good" and the "bad." The multiplicity—or rather duality—of voices within the stories he composed serve a purpose that it is twofold: it illustrates the average process of acquiring an additional language, and the ability with which Dario is able to identify challenges and benefits, sacrifices and rewards, hardship and achievements.

On a final note, Dario's coda attempts to draw parallels between the learning strategies that proved to be effective for him and the ones that he encourages his students to utilize. As expressed in the following statements, there is an evident influence of Dario's academic language-learning experience and some of the instructional strategies he implements in his ESL class:

So one of the things that I did learn in my four years in high school was I always carried a dictionary in Spanish only, a dictionary in English only, and a bilingual dictionary with me all the time. So that really made a difference for me when it came to... If I didn't know a word, I will just pull out my dictionary and that really made difference for me like I said. Now, when I see that you have things like, 'I have a dog,' I knew it meant 'tengo un perro,' but then I say something like... I came across something like, 'I have been good', and so it sounded like 'bean,' it probably means 'frijoles' but that's not how you spell it. So I pulled out my dictionary and I probably didn't find 'been' in the dictionary because back then, they only had the original verb 'to be' So I probably asked someone or I probably ran into a more common past participle, but I then realized by myself that it meant 'he sido bueno.' So now, with these kids, I want them to not have those troubles. I want them to be able to know before they walk out of my classroom. (DS11-2, p. 14)

Well, nowadays it's called computers [laughter] Bilingual sites for looking up words. I do, and I actually encourage them to do it a lot, and I mean... There are different ways to think about it, I once was told that if you tell them the actual word, they're more likely to get it. But then, if they look for the word then, that effort they made might be more meaningful for them, 'cause they can make the connection as to when they looked up the word, it's... Besides the teachers telling them what the word meant. (DS05-3, p. 7)

We read several stories on animals or insects, and they look up the words, I do tell them some of the words, 'specially if I'm walking by them and they have a question, they will ask me. But then, if I'm not available at the moment, they look

them up. (DS05-3, p. 7)

The preceding passages portray Dario as a strategic language learner. In the coda of this story, Dario implicitly alluded to the fact that he draws on his knowledge of language learning strategies to plan for his ELLs' language instruction. Believing that word awareness is the first step to language learning, he designs activities to have the ELLs become familiar with the vocabulary of the content area, focusing on semantics (meaning) and phonics (pronunciation).

Chapter 7

Luis: Students are a Priority

Luis is a 4th grade teacher at Peony Elementary School which had a total student body of 458 for the 2015-2016 academic year. 40% of students are of Hispanic background and 31% was classified as ESOL.

Luis emigrated with his family from Mexico when he was 13 years old. From that point on, Luis went on to earn his degree in Elementary Education from a local state college, married his current wife, became a father, and fulfilled his dream of helping others by becoming a teacher. A prolific storyteller, Luis is the most outspoken participant of the group. From the amusing anecdote of our initial electronic mail exchange, to the welcoming atmosphere of his 4th grade classroom, everything in Luis' world and space is representative of his good-natured spirit and demeanor.

Luis' elementary school years were in Mexico. In his stories about those early years he describes the rural atmosphere of the town, the community and the school. He talks about how in most days, classes will have a late start due to a faulty and unreliable transportations system, and thus, teachers, students, and staff sometimes could not arrive to the school site until 10:00 in the morning. When Luis finished elementary school, he had to switch schools because the local school he attended only went up to 6th grade. Therefore, in order to start middle school he had to ride a bicycle to a town 10 miles away for his 6th grade classes. After a year, his parents made the announcement that they "gotta go some place" (LJ10-1, p. 1) and moved to the U.S. shortly thereafter.

This event in particular represents a notable theme for Luis. As he composed his narrative of learning English and moving to the U.S. he directly and indirectly manifested his resentment towards his parents for forcing him to relocate without any type of

consultation. He clearly expresses his discomfort with the fact that his opinion was not taken into account for a decision that, he considers, should have been made as a family. It took Luis several rounds of interviews to openly admit to this fact:

Part of it was I felt some resentment towards my parents, because they never asked me. They never asked me if I wanted to move. They never gave me a chance to say goodbye to my friends. They bring me here, and my dad in particular, his first job was literally working at a pig farm. And we lived in a city in the Midwest, and he worked in another one, which is an hour. And so he would leave for the week and he would stay there, 'cause he didn't drive and it was just too much. And so he would leave and we wouldn't see him until the weekend.

And it was discouraging for me that... Of course at that point, I kinda felt that I was the one dealing with the biggest problem. He brings me here, but now he's gone. It's not his problem anymore. So it is... I felt discouraged in that sense, and angry with him for bringing me and then now not supporting me, which again I'm sure that if he could have done things differently, he would have. (LJ05-3, p. 10)

I was already upset with my parents, because they didn't ask me; they just brought me, they didn't tell me. (LJ10-1, p. 5)

In hindsight, Luis acknowledges the sacrifices made by his parents, especially his father. He realizes that at the time, he may have blown things out of proportion thinking that he had the worst end of the deal whereas his father seemed to be free of responsibilities besides providing for the family. Despite this post factum realization, Luis' resentment had a significant impact on his emotional state, which contributed to the affective aspect of his language-learning experience. This is especially relevant when considering the four themes of phenomenological interviewing according to Seidman

(2013): (a) temporal and transitory nature of human experience, (b) subjective understanding, (c) lived experience as the foundation of “phenomena,” and (d) the emphasis on meaning and meaning in context. The latter stipulates that meaning is best achieved when set in context. Therefore, Seidman (2013) suggests that the researcher take time to establish a contextual history for the participant’s experience. With this in mind, I made a conscious effort of addressing Luis’ resentment towards his parents’ decision to relocate as part of the emotional factors that influence his language-learning experience, especially since it became such a salient theme within his narrative accounts. Admittedly, this constitutes an integral part of the experience’s contextual history.

My understanding of Luis’s English-language learning experience is based on his evocative stories and reflections. From his many personal stories, I clearly identified several attitudes and beliefs he formed as the result of the social, emotional, and academic challenges he experienced as an ELL: “So, it was difficult in regards to academics, not knowing the language. It was difficult socially because of the language” (LJ10-1, p. 6). A determining factor that exacerbated his language acquisition process was the incipient state of TESOL services in the American education system three decades ago. As a result, Luis explains how upon his enrollment, the school struggled to adequately fulfill his linguistic and academic needs, since it lacked the trained human resources for this purpose, and no official ESOL program was set in place. In his musings, Luis attributes this to demographics. The ELL population in the school was virtually non-existent, and thus, the district did not deem it necessary to establish an ESOL program. In his own words:

The school themselves didn't know how to deal with me. There was no ESL program at the time, none of the teachers spoke Spanish. So, their solution was to

move me from the 8th grade back to 6th grade. And the reason is because there was a classmate of mine, who later on ended up being my roommate in college, but at the time he was in 6th grade and he spoke some Spanish. His family was also a Mexican family and so they thought that they were going to put me in 6th grade so that he could translate for me and help me out, because they didn't know what else to do with me. (LJ10-1, p. 5)

I also felt upset with the school system because they... I didn't feel that they were doing enough to help me. (LJ05-3, p. 10)

There wasn't any special assistance after my first year. I was pretty much on my own. That, again, I don't think that everybody can do that, but that's how it worked for me. All through high school I was completely on my own. I always felt that if I had questions, I could go back to my teachers and ask, but as far as me having to attend certain classes to help me, there wasn't anything like that. (LJ10-1, p. 9)

In addition to the previously discussed resentment he felt towards his parents for the abrupt uprooting, and the effects of an absent English language program, Luis also had to struggle with the social aspect of language learning. In this sense, Luis felt isolated and self-conscious, and though he admits that his peers were welcoming and understanding, the language barrier posed a challenge to his social life:

It was difficult socially because of the language and because, again, making friends was... It was a challenge because of the language. I could tell that those people cared about me and so that wasn't the problem, but it was just hard to communicate. (LJ10-1, p. 6)

Making friends. I think that's one of those that is an underrated ability. I think it makes a difference on learning the language. If you try something and your friends are laughing at you then that shuts you down and you don't wanna try it anymore. And for me, that might have been a challenge I think at the beginning but then eventually that got better. So just making friends, the social language I think were probably the biggest challenges. (LJ10-1, p. 11)

Emotionally, Luis rode the metaphorical rollercoaster as he went through distinct stages of anxiety, frustration, self-doubt, encouragement, confidence, pride, among others. These feelings and emotions would shift accordingly as Luis made progress in his language proficiency and academic performance. Initially, he experienced a lot of self-doubt and his self-esteem was severely affected, as he was overwhelmed with a sense of loss. Luis claims that he seriously doubted his academic skills when he felt incapable of participating in class, submitting assignments, and completing assessments. These academic challenges along with his isolation brought about sadness and despair. The following excerpts have been arranged in chronological order to mirror Luis language-learning timeline, and provide a visual representation of his emotional milestones as they mutate from negative to positive, matching his progress and achievements:

It was horrible. For me, it was a horrible experience, because I went from being... I was a fairly good student, 'A' student in Mexico, feeling accomplished, feeling smart, feeling like I knew what I was doing, and then you move to a country where you can't understand anything. And it was just horrible. I mean, not... It messes with your self-esteem. Not to mention that you're at an age where you're looking at girls and, I don't know, everything just becomes more... You become more self-conscious about yourself. So, it was a difficult experience, like I said,

from being a top student to now not having a clue as to what was going on. (LJ10-1, p. 5)

Because I... In school in Mexico, I did well in school. I was one of the top students the whole time that I was in Mexico and so sometimes you kind of question yourself, 'Well, how... Why? Why is it that I can go from being one of the top students to now being on the bottom? Is it me? Why can't I learn this?' And so there's a lot of just mixed emotions that play in your mind. And like I said, it makes you... It's discouraging and it makes you angry, but at the same time, it's... You don't know exactly who to blame for it. (LJ05-3, p. 10)

And being frustrated during the day. And then I just couldn't wait, watching the clock, so that you could go home. And then you went home, just went to bed and cried, that was it. (LJ05-3, p. 11)

But I remember going home crying, because when you don't understand the language, any time that somebody laughs, you just know they're laughing at you. You have no idea what's happening, and... But, like I said, it just messes with your mind. And I just remember going home very frustrated and telling mom, 'What are we doing here? I wanna go back.' (LJ10-1, p. 5)

And once you realize that, that you're learning something and you are taking steps... Somebody... Havin'... Saying 'hi' to somebody and having them ask you a question, and then you being able to answer, maybe it was just, 'Hi, how are you?' 'Fine.' That was encouraging to me. And once that started happening, then, like I said, things began to change. My motivation improved and once that happened, then the language started coming along and so then things changed. Instead of just being at home crying to your mother, 'cause that's what I would do, then now I'm

going outside and I'm talking to the neighbor who speaks English and he's teaching me new things. (LJ05-3, p. 11)

That year also, my sixth grade year, they would have a math contest for sixth graders and I got chosen to go... I had been there literally months, but because again, I had already done seventh grade in Mexico, I had already seen a lot of those concepts so even though the language was a disadvantage if I could see a multiplication or division problem I could do it.... I got 20th place out of 112 kids or something like that participated, which is pretty good. (LJ10-1, p. 6)

I was able to make those connections even though the schools that I had gone to in Mexico weren't top of the line or anything like that, but I was able to make those connections academically and then just transfer them to English. And so, as the language came, then the academics sort of just followed. (LJ10-1, p. 7)

Once I learned the language, you start picking up on the social language, and just it makes everything so much easier. (LJ10-1, p. 8)

So to me, like I said, I see that as an accomplishment. Going along with that just academically, it just opened so many doors, so many opportunities. (LJ05-3, p. 1)

From these powerful statements, I learned about the multiple challenges that Luis faced throughout his language acquisition process. Additionally, they index the attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge that Luis has extracted from his language-learning experience.

One essential aspect to consider, as Luis makes sense of his language-learning experience, is its affective facet. Despite the varied nature of those feelings and emotions, their pervasiveness is glaringly noticeable in Luis' accounts. Regardless of the story's positive or negative tone, it is always charged with emotion, which underscores Luis' sensitive approach to teaching and learning. Furthermore, it provides a rationale to Luis'

rapport and empathy towards both ELLs and native speakers, along with the explanation of his career choice. The language-learning experience had such an emotional impact on him that it was because of it that he decided to become a teacher: “That experience, though, is what led me to become a teacher” (LJ10-1, p. 6). The passages below further confirm this fact:

I had that great experience, my sixth-grade year with Mrs. R. We lived in the Midwest and if you're at all familiar with the City, you know the population in is over 50% Hispanic. The schools are over 50% Hispanic. And so even though I didn't go to school in the City, I knew as I was starting to think about jobs, I knew that there was gonna be opportunities there and there was a need for me. And so that's the reason why I ended up there. I just knew that, that I could make a difference because somebody else had made a difference in my life. And so really that wasn't a question as to what I wanted to do. (LJ10-1, p. 12)

And so it was at that time that I thought, ‘You know what? I wanna do that. I know this is difficult. When I grow up, I wanna make sure that I am that person for somebody else.’ And so that's where my desire for teaching came from. (LJ10-1, p. 6)

And then now, being a teacher, it gives me the opportunity to relate to the students, to understand their struggles and to be a little more... Perhaps a little more patient, a little more understanding of the things that they have to deal with. I don't mind sharing my story with the students, so that hopefully they can see the possibilities here in the United States. So I keep telling them just how important that is for their future. So there's been a lot of things that have come as a result of it, but I think, like I said, in the classroom today, it's just that having gone through

it myself, I can definitely connect and relate those experiences with the students.

(LJ05-3, p. 2)

In the early stages of sifting through my conversations with Luis, what emerged was an unequivocal influence of his personal practical knowledge on his teaching style. I found that many of his teaching decisions, lesson planning adaptations, and overall philosophy in teaching and learning, were clearly connected to what he experienced as a student, and as an ELL. Analyzing some of the stories related to his language-learning experience, Luis referred to his inquisitive nature and how his teachers reacted to it. He explained how helpful and beneficial it was that his teachers gave him the opportunity to ask questions about what he considered to be important. Nowadays, Luis's teaching philosophy focuses on creating a classroom climate of inquiry, showcasing students' interests with content and non-content related questions.

More than any other participant, Luis uses the codas of his personal experience stories to make connections to his teaching for ELLs. Consistent with the claims of Golombek (2009) regarding the influence of PPK on ESL teachers' practice, Luis reconstructs his experiences and this, in turn, shapes his teaching style. This is also congruent with the findings of Pedrana (2009), when she explored the influence of private and public experiences on teachers' actions or inactions. She set out to validate the premise that "...experiences directly influence who we are and what we do as teachers" (p. 175). As the following statements demonstrate, Luis's teaching mission is bringing students' interests to the forefront of classroom dynamics, based on what he experienced as a student and a language learner:

And so whether she was supposed to teach me academics or not, I remember going to her with my questions. This is what I wanna know, this is what I wanna

learn. And it was related to the language, it wasn't about the academics. There were times when I remember we were working on a workbook where we would read a little bit in English and then there'd be some questions and we'd practice. (LJ10-1, p. 9)

It was all just based on the things that I remember struggling with. That's how I would decide the things that I needed to teach the kids. And then one of the things that I always enjoyed is the opportunity to ask questions so I always made sure to have five to ten minutes of class time where it was their time. What do you wanna know? What have you heard? (LJ10-1, p. 15)

She used to make us write a journal. Every day we wrote in our journal, and it was just kinda like... Just any questions that we had, sometimes I'm sure it was related to things we were doing in class, but we would write to her and then she would write us back. And this was every week. (LJ10-1, p. 6)

I don't know that it was planned or anything like that but like I said, I was just naturally curious about those kind of things, so I would go to her and ask those questions. That's where the idea came to me that I needed to give the kids an opportunity to ask the things that they know. To this day I struggle. If I have to rate myself as a teacher, my weakest area is letting the students speak too much. I believe in those teachable moments, and we've gone to a point in education where we're told... Not just what to teach, but how to teach it. And it's getting almost ridiculous as to how much or how long something should take. And I struggle with that, because that's not me. If we're talking about... I don't know, we were talking about types of writing the other day, we were talking about... Some things are written to inform, and to persuade. And I said something about, 'Well, if you

watched TV a couple nights ago, the Democratic candidates were on TV trying to persuade you to vote for them.’ And then immediately, someone said, ‘Well, I heard that Hillary is gonna be our first female president.’ Well, that has nothing to do with my objective, which was about writing... And they will need to learn about that. And so, there's five minutes, ten minutes sometimes, completely off-topic from what I was originally planning to teach. I was hoping the principal don't come in. So I struggle with that, but it's important. It was important to me then: ‘I wanna know this now. I don't care what you're trying to teach me, this is what I need to know.’ And so, I made it a point back in these days to give them a voice and to try to let them know that this is your classroom too. It's not just about me. And so, like I said, it's just things that were important to me, things that I was curious... At their age, I would try to look back, and I would try to make sure that I gave them the opportunities to cover that in our own class. (LJ10-1, p. 16)

Luis's emphasis on providing students with a space for inquiry is inextricably related to occurrences that he has designated as “teachable moments.” These unplanned opportunities are of utmost importance for Luis, as I was able to glean from interviews, voice memos, and observations. Coupled with the creation of an inquiry space, I contend that the importance given to these teachable moments also stems directly from his PPK, as a result of his language-learning experience and K-12 education. I based my contention on the premise that PPK is knowledge that reflects the individual's prior experience and acknowledges the contextual nature of that knowledge. It is a type of knowledge that is carved out of, and shaped by, situations (Clandinin, 1985). Consequently, the accumulation of Luis educational experiences, and the circumstantial elements surrounding them: language, culture, geographic location, emotional state,

social life, relationships with teacher, academic performance, parental involvement, and so forth, influence and impact his pedagogical knowledge of elementary education and language learning.

What follows are passages where the recurrent theme of teachable moments emerges to illustrate how PPK operates on teaching practices:

Not if you're concerned about the students. It's not just you. I could do it. I could literally set up a timer and say 'Okay.' But at the end of...let's say you have five minutes to do something, what if the students still have questions? And for me, I believe in those teachable moments. If the students are participating and it's within the topic, better yet if it's something that they're wanting to know about... some of our better discussions...like in Social Studies, we talked about rights and responsibilities, the students really get into the topic. They're asking questions, they wanna know as far as 'Why is it important to vote? Who gets to vote? Why should I get to vote? What's the process? How do you apply for it?' And nowhere in my standard does it tell me that I need to teach my kids how to register to vote. (LJ05-3, p. 7)

I'm one of those that I'm always listening to the students and I believe in teachable moments. Here, I could go crazy trying to explain something to you, but if you're not interested in it, I'm wasting my time. So instead, I'm listening to the kids, and if they have a question and it's somewhat related to what we're doing, I go there because that's what they wanna know. Okay, that's how I keep them interested in participating if I try to share my classroom. I try to value what they're saying and that's one of the things with, I think, with one of these new ideas is that we've gotta do things and time everything and stick to the schedule, and sometimes you

just can't do that. So I like to be mindful of the students in what they need. (LJ11-2, p. 5)

So that's kind of where my philosophy is. I think that all students can learn. I think that I like to take advantage of those teachable moments when it's them that wanna know something. There's something that I can answer for you because you wanna know it. That's my philosophy. I also believe that the students need to be comfortable before they can learn anything. If they don't feel at home, if they don't feel comfortable with you, no matter what strategies you use they're not going to learn. So, like I said, make them feel comfortable first and then try to let them dictate the pace. Move only when they're ready, rather than when the schedule says. (LJ11-2, p. 6)

Thus far, composing Luis's narrative has been a process that has unfolded with a natural flow. In other words, the themes I identified from the data analysis were connected in a sequential way, and although this interconnectedness is decidedly present in the stories of the other two participants, the ones present in Luis's accounts seem to follow a logical order. First, I came across Luis's mission-oriented objective of creating inquiry spaces for students. This, in turn, opens a window of opportunity for teachable moments, which places students front and center. Consequently, students—as a priority—is the other major theme within Luis's narrative.

As I scrutinized my observation field notes and the transcripts of my conversations with Luis what became increasingly evident was his effort to put students at the forefront of the class, both literally and figuratively. This assertion is based on several activities in which Luis had assigned students with a research topic and then had

them individually present it to the class. In other instances, Luis had explicitly mentioned he prioritizes students above anything else as portrayed in the following excerpts:

But they might be 10 years old now, but here in the next few years, they're going to be needing to do those kinds of things. And I kinda feel like it is my responsibility to plant those seeds. If they wanna know, I don't feel that I should have to stick to the standards all the time. It's something they wanna know, it's something that's important, it may not be necessarily my standard, it might be sixth, seventh grade, but what's the problem with giving them the information at the time that they're needing it, at the time they're wanting it, because that's when they really are ready to learn. And that's why I just can't stick to 'Okay, well my five minutes are up. Sorry, save it for tomorrow.' It's just not... I just don't think that's good teaching. (LJ05-3, p. 7)

We always say, 'We know that students learn in different ways, and they learn at different speeds.' But yet we try to... Especially in the past, I think that was one of the things that as educators, we failed miserably. We knew that not everybody understood the same way or learn the same way, yet we try to teach everybody the same way. And if we're saying that, then we kinda need to practice what we preach. We need to try to address it in different ways as well. And so that's kind of what I mean by that. Students learn in different ways and therefore, we need to try to teach them in different ways, whatever methods make sense. (LJ05-3, p. 8)

Sometimes I think as teachers, we separate ourselves from the students. 'I'm the teacher, I'm the adult. You're the kid.' Aside from 'You're my student and I'm your teacher', there's no other connection. But if you can establish that, let them know that you're a person, just like they are. You have concerns, you have

questions. There's a lot more that you have in common than you think. And if you can establish that with your students, the more comfortable that they feel with you, the more that they trust you, and if they can trust you and feel comfortable with you, the learning's gonna happen, and the discipline is not as much of an issue. I just... That's how I feel about it to this day. Try to make those connections with the students. Sometimes it's going to their soccer game. It's... If you've ever done something like that, you know how important it is to those kids. When they're at a music program and they see you sitting there, in the middle of the program, they'll wave their hand at you, so it's important to them. (LJ05-3, p. 9)

There's some students that sometimes they're good at music. So maybe you just allow them to show you what they've learned and don't just say it has to be this way. And sometimes it just may be either, they can... You can meet up with them and you can talk to them. Maybe the exact same questions, but rather than them having to write it out and explain it, you can just be talking and it could be an oral test. So it kind of depends on what you want to do. Like I said, just being aware of it, of their needs, and if they need extra time, if they need more of a smaller setting 'cause a lot of students do get that anxiety when they're doing a test, and maybe like I said that in those kinda situations, maybe you don't want it to look like a setting where everybody's like, 'Okay everybody get your privacy folders and let's have a test.' Just try to give them other opportunities to show you what they know. (LJ05-3, p. 14)

From providing accommodations such as alternative assessments, to acknowledging and targeting different learning styles; from showing interest in students' extracurricular activities, to making meaningful connections, Luis's teaching philosophy

centers around the idea of having students as a priority in terms of instructional planning and praxis. Comparatively, an analysis from a critical pedagogy standpoint yields an alignment of Luis's teaching practices with Freire's critical framework, which seeks emancipation and freedom from oppression. It can be distinguished from other teaching philosophies by emphasizing a type of learning that transcends the classroom boundaries and reaches out to the community. Therefore, the teaching and learning environment must be dialogic, provide empowerment, and incorporate the concept of voice (Haque, 2007).

I argue that Luis has, inadvertently or not, instilled a critical pedagogy approach to his teaching by prioritizing students' interests, and ascertaining that their voices are heard, in both a literal and figurative way. My argument is furthered by supporting Luis's testimonial anecdotes with the three goals sought by critical pedagogy applied to English language teaching as purported by Crookes (2013): (1) Simultaneous development of English communicative abilities (2) Application of knowledge to develop a critical awareness of the world (3) Ability to act on knowledge and awareness to improve matters. Given these points, I find Luis's approach to teaching as one that is compatible with the foundational principles of critical pedagogy. Through his statements, reflections, and my observations, Luis portrays his teaching role as one that is committed and inclusive. He also creates an atmosphere where ELLs and native speakers feel welcomed and valued, while simultaneously being challenged to constantly question the world around them. In this sense, Luis does not polarize his instruction as one targeted at teaching content, and one to focus on ELLs linguistic needs. On the contrary, he has managed to consolidate them, positioning himself as a supporter of students' learning and their personal development as citizens of the world.

Chapter 8

Summary of Findings

Considering the current demographics of K-12 education in the U.S., the presence of ELLs is increasing at an accelerated rate (August, 2006; Kindler, 2002; National Center for Education Statistics [NCE], 2016; Office of English Language Acquisition [OELA], 2015), yet their academic performance is reported to be low (Short, Fidelman & Louguit, 2012; Reardon & Galindo, 2009; August, 2006; Cartiera, 2006). Although the causes for this are varied and multifaceted, one of great importance is that educators' training for teaching ELLs has been largely overlooked (Cartiera, 2006; Giambo, Szecsi & Manning, 2005; Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2004). Under these circumstances, it is critical to complement quantitative research with qualitative, to be able to understand the influence that language-learning experiences have in teachers' personal practical knowledge for teaching ELLs and to consider the implications of this for pre-service teacher program in higher education institutions.

To this end, I used a phenomenological qualitative methodology for data collection framed by theories of personal practical knowledge and critical pedagogy. In my analysis of participants' language-learning stories, and interviews about their practices, I concluded that teachers with language-learning experiences generally appear to demonstrate favorable attitudes toward the ELLs they teach. In this chapter, I discuss what this study contributes to this premise. In subsequent sections I elaborate on the construction of the participants' personal practical knowledge from their language-learning experiences and the complex set of issues that influence whether and how they employ their PPK in practice as they teach ELLs.

For consistency purposes, I have chosen to maintain the visibility of individual participants throughout the discussion of this concluding chapter. While it might have been efficient to compile what I learned about each participant into thematic generalizations, I believe doing so would not have effectively showcased the uniqueness and diverse quality of the studied phenomenon. Instead, I will present findings in respect to the research questions thematically, displaying the similarities and differences among participants' personal practical knowledge in conjunction with the understanding of their language-learning experience and their unique construction and enactment of it.

The Essence of the Language-Learning Experience

The first guiding question for this research study asks: What are the experiences of formerly classified ELLs who have become teachers of ELLs in general classrooms or specialized ESOL programs? All the participants in this study offered an assorted array of language-learning stories that varied in their starting points, contexts, duration, outcomes, and personal investment. I consider this variance and diversity in the stories shared to be a supporting argument for employing a qualitative approach. Qualitative strategies offer the possibility of exploring these issues and experiences in-depth, going beyond the “what” of the phenomenon and answering other questions such as “how” or “why.” Phenomenology is a qualitative genre that seeks the study of the essence, which is understood as the description of a phenomenon (Merleau-Ponty & Smith, 1996). Therefore, it aligned with the study's objective of understanding the phenomenon of language learning as experienced by formerly classified ELLs. For this purpose, the analysis of the data was guided by the question: What is the essence (meaning) of the language-learning experience? In so doing, three phenomenological themes emerged as the structure of the experience (Van Manen, 2016) based on what the participants had

expressed both explicitly and implicitly. I have outlined these themes with their accompanying description in the following section.

Theme 1. Coming of Age: An experience of growth

From a literary perspective, coming of age is the genre or theme that follows the organic development of an individual from childhood or adolescence to adulthood (McWilliams, 2009). The coming-of-age narratives typically feature a young protagonist who goes through a troubled search for an adult identity by process of trials, experiences, and revelations (McWilliams, 2009; Callahan & Muller, 2013). The term originally comes from the German *bildungsroman* in the late 1800s, and it has since remained a prominent narrative theme in literature. I have borrowed the defining qualities of this literary genre to illustrate the first theme which refers to growth, understood as a process of “becoming.” This take on growth entails transcending its literal meaning of biological changes, and instead, focuses on the individual’s psychological development and transformation.

To understand “coming of age” as a metaphor that illustrates and explains growth from the experience of language-learning, it is necessary to operationalize its definition within the scope of this study. Iversen (2009) interprets “coming of age” as the process through which the individual achieves maturity gradually and with difficulty. She claims that the genre often centers around a conflict between the protagonist and the values of society. This is eventually resolved by the individual’s acceptance of the values of society, and society accepting the individual (Iversen, 2009). This concept is further explained by Gohlman (1990), who asserts that “coming of age” is based on the shaping of the individual through acculturation and social experience to the brink of maturity. Additionally, Gohlman (1990) outlines what I considered to be the most relevant features

of the “coming of age” genre in relation to this study: “at the heart of it lies the notion of the individual in contact with a world whose meaning must be actively shaped and reshaped from within up to the point when the hero is in a position to say, “I think I can live with it now” (p. 25).

When juxtaposing these defining features to the participants’ narrative, I identified significant parallels between features of “coming of age” and the participants’ understanding of their language-learning experience. Although participants’ recollections about their language-learning experience were unique, they all featured issues of struggle and success which are essential to the existence of a “coming of age” story, as trials and troubled adaptations are part of the process (McWilliams, 2009). The pervasiveness of this motif within the participants’ accounts, led me to the realization that it could be construed as a major theme within the study, and consolidates the multifaceted nature of the stories that constitute their experience. Thus, it provides answers to the main research question of this study: “What are the experiences of individuals formerly classified as ELLs who have become bilingual teachers of ELLs in general classrooms or specialized ESOL programs?”

As participants described their challenges and accomplishments, they all seemed to agree that, all in all, learning English had been a experience of growth and “becoming” which led me to adopt a coming-of-age metaphor to better illustrate this theme. The notion of “becoming” situated at the core of “coming of age” is evidenced, in a literal sense, when Dario talks about the meaning of his language-learning experience: “It meant becoming [emphasis added] a different person from when you came ... it means acquiring new perspectives as a, just a citizen of the world” (DS3-05, p.1). For Lisa, change, acculturation, and struggling to reconcile with the new environment in which she found

herself, were also present. She endured the process of internalizing the values of a new society, and the community (society) accepting her, as any bildungsroman female character would have. Lisa's "becoming" was highly emotional, and although she does not attribute to the acquisition of language per se, she still associates these troubled times with the language-learning experience:

It was not hard to learn the language, but the change was very hard. The change was very hard and I was very young, so it was easy to learn, but the emotional piece was very abrupt for me at that time. I don't think learning the language...I can't remember that being hard or difficult. I just remember a lot of emotion to it, because of everything else that goes on when someone moves to a new place.

(LS05-3, p. 2)

In regards with her process of adaptation, acculturation, and conflicts with society, Lisa provides an example of her initial struggles:

The thing that we noticed was that outside of the classroom, Spanish was not encouraged. So you were looked down upon if you spoke Spanish ...by the community as a whole. I remember we went to the store, and again it was a very small town, people would look at you if you spoke Spanish, if you were not speaking English... They never... No one ever said anything mean to us that I can remember, but you could just tell the... See their look in their face. (LS1-10, p. 5)

The preceding passage demonstrates how Lisa reflects upon the linguistic discrimination (Tsuda, 2008) she experienced when she first arrived to the U.S. Nevertheless, Lisa's resilience helped her overcome this and other challenges, by coming to terms with the reality of her situation, and making progress in her schooling and language proficiency. As a result of "becoming", these unpleasant encounters derived

from linguisticism, brought about a fervent pride in her Mexican heritage which, to this day, influences her parenting and her teaching of native speakers of English and ELLs.

In contrast with Dario and Lisa, Luis views his “becoming” of the language-learning experience from a “reverse” perspective. The process of “coming-of age” is usually portrayed in a linear perspective, describing the evolution, or “becoming” of the individual from childhood/adolescence to adulthood. This could also be represented as a timeline that signals progression from point “a” to point “b,” where “a” symbolizes the beginning usually filled with challenges, adversities, and trials; and “b” represents the attainment of maturity and some type of resolution (Iversen, 2009). Both Lisa’s and Dario’s meaning-making of their language-learning experience have followed this linear pattern of “coming-of-age” in the sense that the format of their accounts followed the “a” to “b” pattern. When asked about the meaning of their language-learning experience they both started by either identifying key challenges or by describing the starting point of their language-learning process. By contrast, Luis initiates his account by the ending part of the process of “becoming” (point “b”). The decision to adopt a “forward” or “reverse” analysis of “becoming” could be indicative of how the participants may have intentionally or unintentionally decided to approach their own processes of “becoming.” Therefore, Luis may have prioritized the ending vis-à-vis the early stages of the language-learning process and its corresponding socio-cultural aspects. This “reverse” perspective can be observed in the following excerpt:

...it gives me a great sense of accomplishment, for one, because there's a lot of people that spend many years and don't have the opportunity or don't take the opportunity to learn the language. So to me, like I said, I see that as an accomplishment. (LJ05-3, p. 2)

By beginning with the “end,” Luis is underscoring the importance of the outcome. He focuses on the accomplishments and values the opportunities given by virtue of “becoming” bilingual.

As I came to the realization that the participants’ language-learning experience had been deemed as a time of trials and tribulations, I surmised that the emotional nature of language learning might be the reason why the participants feel so strongly about their language-learning process, significantly impacting their childhood and adolescence from a socio-linguistic, and socio-cultural standpoint. In what follows, I engage in the textural description (Moustakas, 1994) of the participants’ language-learning experience as a process of “becoming.”

Struggles and negative emotions permeated the recollections of the language-learning experience by Lisa who has summarized it as being a “very difficult time.” She expressed feeling “disengaged,” “with no friends,” and not getting “any support” from her high school teachers. Even when recounting what others might perceive as successes, such as graduation, and acquiring proficiency in English, she frames them within the larger narrative of struggle. For instance, she admits to successfully learning English but quickly dismisses it as something that was not hard to achieve: “I don’t think learning the language...I can’t remember that being hard or difficult” (LS05-3, p. 2), especially when compared to the emotional aspect: “It was not hard to learn the language, but the change was very hard” (LS05-3, p. 2). When discussing a significant accomplishment such as graduation, she specifically mentions that she owes this to her parents’ unwavering support, in opposition to the lack of support from her high school teachers: “The reason why I graduated and I went all the way through college was just because of my mom. She

was the one. Mom and dad. Other than that, there was no one. I cannot say that a teacher supported me” (LS11-2, p. 5).

Among the negative emotions the two other participants reported experiencing as they learned English were confusion, frustration, discomfort, lack of confidence, and lack of belonging. Both Dario and Luis recalled negative emotions in response to such issues as comprehension difficulties, lack of accommodations, absence of social interaction, and an educational system that was unsupportive. Dario described the process as “tiring,” “very hard,” that “it required a lot of attention” and was a “culture shock.” Along the same lines, Luis affirms that he “picked up the language fairly quickly” and that it gave him “a great sense of accomplishment.” Nevertheless, he underscores the numerous times he went home “crying,” how “difficult” the process was, and that it was challenging from a social standpoint.

Out of the three participants, Dario and Lisa were the ones whose recollections of the language-learning process had more positive associations with success. Coincidentally, they are the youngest participants in the study. Their enrollment in bilingual programs and ESL classes, respectively, can be attributed to a shift in TESOL methodology from a focus on (a) discrete grammatical structures to an emphasis on communication, (b) from communicative language teaching to task-based language teaching, and (c) from method-based pedagogy to post method pedagogy; a change that has occurred gradually in this field over the past 20 years (Kumaravadivelu, 2003a, 2006). In regards to this, Dario stated that “One of the things that I really liked also is that most teachers care for the students and that really made a difference for me too, because the teachers were there to help you and just to be there.” And even though Lisa referred to her high school years as her “worst,” she admitted to having had a positive experience

in her elementary school years as she participated in a bilingual program: “I think that in elementary the environment was very friendly. ... I think it was a lot easier for me because again, I was in bilingual classroom. I was in a safe place. My teacher would speak Spanish to me if I needed it” (LS11-2, p. 5). Conversely, Luis’s language-learning success story was outlined by drive, self-reliance, and little to none specialized support, which might be a direct outcome of the TESOL educational context of the time.

Therefore, he did not have access to bilingual instruction, newcomers program, or ESL classes as these were yet to be implemented in K-12 education: “Nobody was helping me, there wasn't tutors or anything like that. So I was pretty much on my own” (LJ10-1, p. 9). Thus, he had virtually no accommodations as he was mainstreamed upon enrollment, and was merely provided with the assistance of a member of the school staff who briefly met with him to help him as much as she could. His key to success was the motivation to push through and rely on his drive and resilience: “The good thing about it, I suppose, is that it helped me pick up the language quicker, because I quickly realized that, ‘I’m on my own here. If I don’t learn, I’m in trouble’ ” (LJ10-1, p. 5).

In their stories of success, these three participants characterized language learning as “fine,” “not hard or difficult,” “a good thing,” and “a great experience.” In addition, two participants, Luis and Dario, proposed that participating in extracurricular activities such as sports had a positive impact on their experience, specifically, from a social perspective. Luis explained that he was able to make friends once he started playing for some of the school’s sports teams: “And so I got that chance to play American football and basketball and ran track and I was successful so that all kinda helped me make friends, and so things got easier over time” (LJ10-1, p. 6). By the same token, Dario also

affirms that playing sports allowed him to socialize more although he admits to never having actual friends in those years:

During that time I would say I had no real friends. Once, during my junior year in high school, I started playing soccer... And some of them I became closer to them, but not necessarily friends because they still cared more about their soccer skills more than their grades sometimes. So that was probably the major challenge. I couldn't meet people who had the same goals that I had back then.
(DS10-1, p. 5)

As participants described their language-learning experiences as filled with challenges and struggles, they seem to interpret them primarily from the perspective of the child or adolescent they were at the time they occurred, as was seen, for example, in Luis's narratives of going home crying in frustration, Dario's confusion and culture shock, and Lisa's nostalgic statement longing for her toys: "And we cried a lot because we were in a new house, we didn't have our toys, we didn't have our things, and we knew that we would be here for a long time" (LS10-1, p.3). The participants mainly attributed their struggles to matters outside their control, such as parental decisions, unsupportive teachers, and unwelcoming communities, though they eventually engaged in additional reflection of the language-learning struggles from an adult perspective. By doing so, they were able to make sense of the experience and take stock of the assets gained. To illustrate this labor of retrospection, Lisa claims to be cognizant of the advantages of being a bilingual person nowadays:

I think it's very important. I think it's very important, and 'specially being on this setting, in a dual-language classroom, and the lessons learned from hardship: I remember that it was hard, but at the same... I don't know. I do think that all of the

things that we go through help us or shape us to who we are right now. I don't know. Good or bad. We all learned from that. (LS03-3, p.11)

Similarly, Dario acknowledges the benefits of bilingualism as he states that it becomes part of your cultural capital, and fosters critical thinking skills:

Comparing situations in both languages and how some of the things don't really transfer and some of the other ones transfer really easily, but then just without even noticing it, you are becoming a bicultural person, bilingual, bicultural individual. I had learned another language ...and I could use it to learn. (DS05-3, p. 1)

Comparatively, Luis reflects on the meaning of his language-learning experience as he realized it influenced his career choice, and became an integral part of his personal development:

First of all, it gives me a great sense of accomplishment, for one, because there's a lot of people that spend many years and don't have the opportunity or don't take the opportunity to learn the language. So to me, like I said, I see that as an accomplishment. Going along with that just academically, it just opened so many doors, so many opportunities. (LJ05-3, p. 1)

The compelling nature of the narratives above indicate that the participants coincide in describing their language-learning experience as a process akin to “coming of age.” Regardless, of the negative and positive memories they associate with this time in their lives, they ascribe a significant importance to learning English as ELLs in a second language context, for the experience greatly impacted their personal, social, cultural, professional, and academic life. My understanding of the theme of “coming of age” as the experience of learning English as a second language, is that it helps me make sense of

this phenomenon within a larger context: the context of adolescence and adulthood.

Furthermore, it serves the purpose of encapsulating and reducing the phenomenon into a manageable concept without generalizing, but rather elaborate on it by providing meaningful descriptions (Van Manen, 2016). To this end, the “coming of age” theme becomes an overarching term that encompasses a diverse array of emotions, feelings, thoughts, associated with a period of trials, challenges, and struggles that led the participants into a state of personal and academic maturity, by experiencing a language-learning process, and the effects of acculturation.

Theme 2. Attitudes towards ELLs: Empathy

Aligning with my initial expectations, all the participants developed attitudes toward ELLs that were influenced by their interpretations of their language-learning experiences. In some instances, this was clearly evidenced when explicitly shared by the participant. What emanated from the data analysis in reference to attitudes is that, although they were multifaceted in nature, they all seem to converge in a common one: empathy. In addition, the emergence of this thematic concept was of utmost importance for the main objectives of this research study, as it partially answers one of the guiding questions, “How can these experiences help in understanding the needs and struggles of ELLs?” In this sense, empathy becomes the phenomenological theme through which the participants initiate the process of rationalizing the academic, social, and cultural circumstances that surround the language-learning experience of ELLs. In other words, empathy allows these teachers to identify, and eventually address, the needs, challenges, and struggles of these linguistically and culturally diverse students. What follows is a description of how empathy has operated in the teaching lives of the participants in various ways.

The empathy Lisa feels toward ELLs is evidenced by the following account:

This year there was a family from Mexico who just moved, and not to my classroom but there are three siblings at different grade levels. And when I knew about this new kid in fourth grade, I just had flashbacks. I just had flashbacks and I thought, 'Oh, my goodness.' And I just thought of all these things that this kid could be thinking, all of these things he could be going through.

And the reason I got to know him was because he got in trouble once. He was walking in a line, and he smacked another student in the back of his head and the teacher was so angry. And the teacher didn't know any Spanish, so he pulled me over, he asked for help. I talked to the student to figure out what was happening. It turns out the other student was bullying him for a very long time and he never said a single word. He got in trouble, but then I had to explain to him things that again, maybe he didn't know about, maybe he didn't want to tell on the other students. I don't know what reasons he had to stay quiet so long, but I got to know him. And that's when I knew that he was new to the school and sometimes I touch base with him. I want to be that someone else that I didn't have when I was going through those same things. Because I know how hard it was. And I make sure that I say hi whenever I see him and we have very short brief conversations as I asked about his day, about different things. And he gets very, at least in my eyes, he gets very happy when he sees me. I'm not sure if that's the case. And I just again, I had all those flashbacks from when I was going through the same things and I wanted to just kind of hug him and protect him and let nothing bad happen to that poor child. And that happened this year. To me that was very, very emotional time, very powerful time. But with my students I remind him or remind them that they

need to learn the other language. Things are not going to be easy, just keep on trying and it's not okay if you're not perfect right now but you'll get there. (LS11-2, p. 15)

Through this passage Lisa expresses her concerns and explains how she, quite literally, empathizes with this student's situation based on all the memories she has that relate to the language-learning experience. This connection can be further explained by PPK applied in the context of language learning. Golombek (2009) states according to his findings that teachers filtered experience in such a way that they reconstructed it and acted in response to the demands of teaching situations, and the shaping of their own teaching practice. In addition, he concludes that PPK is "...an affective and moral way of knowing that is permeated with a concern for the consequences of practice for both teachers and students. Through their stories, teachers become aware of these consequences" (p. 447). Therefore, Lisa has become aware through her PPK, and as her stories are at the cornerstone of it, of the circumstances, outcomes, and consequences of situations like the ones described. She has developed a sense of awareness towards individuals (ELLs) who have experienced, or may potentially experience, the feelings, emotions, and struggles of being an ELL in the U.S. This is further evidenced in her desire to "care" and "nurture" her students, something that she relates to her motherhood and her language-learning experiences.

Likewise, Luis demonstrated his empathy towards ELLs as a result of applying his PPK when he shared the following statement:

And then now, being a teacher, it gives me the opportunity to relate to the students, to understand their struggles and to be a little more... Perhaps a little more patient, a little more understanding of the things that they have to deal with.

I don't mind sharing my story with the students, so that hopefully they can see the possibilities here in the United States. So I keep telling them just how important that is for their future. So there's been a lot of things that have come as a result of it, but I think, like I said, in the classroom today, it's just that having gone through it myself, I can definitely connect and relate those experiences with the students.

(LJ05-3, p. 2)

With those assertions, Luis has quite explicitly admitted to empathize with his students through a reflection of his own language-learning experience. His reflections on the experience of trying to survive in a culture different from his, and his initial frustration with language learning may have led him to develop two favorable attitudes toward ELLs: empathy for the frustration they feel in a new environment and patience to guide their progress.

In contrast, Dario demonstrated an unfavorable attitude toward some of the ELLs he teaches. He perceived them as unmotivated, a trait very much in contrast with his self-reported image as a driven language learner. Whereas Dario deemed his language-learning success to be the result of high motivation: "A lot of my classmates who started learning English with me were not really pushing themselves to the level I was pushing myself," he claims that his ELLs' lack of English skills and low academic performance are the result of poor motivation:

I try to talk to them. I try to just... Usually the students who struggle a lot are sort of close-minded in a sense. Sometimes it doesn't really matter what you tell them, they'll still keep doing the things they do. But then, I try to talk to them, some of them are not very open, they wouldn't be, and that's the major challenge. Finding the common ground is a major challenge. And then, they usually take it against

you because they might not like school, they might not like your class, they might not like your teaching style, but then they're there, especially in social studies, if they don't pass the class, they won't graduate. But then, still some of them choose not to do anything. (DS05-3, p. 4)

I think motivation is the major one. Motivation to learn the academic language component rather than the social. I think their social component should be really strong in English. But then their academic is not as strong. You notice it a lot in their writing, in their reading, especially the motivation to read. I'm pretty sure they could read but they choose not to read a lot of the times, so that lowers their grades a lot because they haven't read information and they can't answer questions or they can't come up with a paragraph or an essay for the test or things like that. I think it's both, the language barrier that exists, it's there for them, but then their motivation is not the strongest, they need to motivate themselves or find a purpose for them to learn. (DS11-02, p. 12)

However, after a deeper analysis of Dario's interviews and field notes from his classroom observations, I realized that despite the aforementioned statements, he does share the element of empathy towards ELLs with the other participants. I attribute this variance to specific circumstances surrounding his teaching context. For instance, he is high school teacher, and thus, his ELLs are adolescents who are experimenting various physical and psychological changes. In contrast with Dario, Lisa and Luis are elementary teachers responsible for younger learners who are not yet experiencing the biological and psychological changes of adolescence. Another influential factor may be Dario's personality and his own set of beliefs. As mentioned before, his views on schooling are that it should be rigorous and it is a pathway to power: "learning gives you power." This

is also an effect on how PPK operates not only in teachers' decisions and practices, but also on their views of students, and education in general. In any event, Dario's empathy is noticeable in the assumptions he makes while attempting to explain why ELLs in his class may lack motivation or underperform academically:

ELL, beginner ELL. Some of them don't always come prepared. They have rough days, especially since it's the beginning of the day, they probably did not have breakfast, they probably woke up late, they probably have family situations that they deal with and their performance is affected with all of those factors. And therefore, they become very unpredictable when it comes to actually doing the work and finding the motivation and actually wanting to acquire the second language. (DS05-3, p. 6)

In addition to this, Dario also expresses his concerns and shares the advice he usually gives his students about focusing on hard work and achievement rather than perfection:

So, that's my major concern for them. I mean, for them to see the opportunities that are out there for them, regardless of their motivation...It could be in whatever subject they want into the career they want, if they really pay attention and do the actual work. You don't have to be really smart. You don't have to be super clever. (DS03-3, p. 6)

The relevance of this phenomenological theme is supported by the ideas put forth by Zembylas (2007) when he calls for the association between pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and emotional knowledge. By emotional knowledge, Zembylas (2007) refers to the knowledge teachers have about their emotional experiences with respect to themselves or others; e.g., students, staff, colleagues, and the socio-political context in

which teaching and learning occur. Based on this argument and the passages discussed above, the emotional knowledge dimension of PCK is evidenced on the participants' narrative by indexing the emotional aspect of their language-learning experience to the empathy shown to their ELLs.

The participants' narratives provided thus far, elicit a rationale for establishing a connection between teachers' emotional understanding—empathy— and what they know about content, pedagogy, personal histories, and experiences (PPK), with the objective of effective teaching. (Zembylas, 2007). For instance, Dario's story portrays the interaction between attitudes about education, language acquisition, content knowledge, and vision about language teaching and learning. Lisa's story indicates the powerful impact of personal experience (language learning experience) on the enactment of caring and empathy. Finally, Luis's story provides an account of the intricate and varied emotional thoughts a teacher develops over time and how they influence his or her practice, especially about topics that concern the society at large.

Theme 3: Influence of the Language-learning Experience on Pedagogy for ELLs

The final guiding questions for this research study asked: "How do these experiences contribute to teachers' personal practical knowledge and influence their teaching practices?" and, "How can the understanding of those experiences foster critical consciousness and lead to an implementation of critical pedagogy for linguistically and culturally diverse students?" In a broader sense, this study found that participants held favorable attitudes toward the ELLs they teach, along with a set of beliefs about practices that both converged and diverged from what previous studies had found (Golombek, 2009; Freeman, 2002; Chou, 2008; Xu & Liu, 2009; Sun, 2012; Pedrana, 2009; Ellis, 2006; Ariougul, 2007), and actual practices that evenly aligned with the beliefs they had

articulated. In all of the three participants' profiles, it was clear that these attitudes, beliefs, and practices were the outcomes, and reflections, of their own language-learning experiences. As I individualized the influence on the language-learning experience on teaching practices for each participant, I delineated the particular ways in which the experience contributed to their PPK and its enactment in their pedagogical approaches.

As previously discussed, the participants seemed to hold favorable dispositions toward both the ELLs and their home languages. I attribute this not only to their language-learning experience but also to the coincidental fact that all participants are native speakers of Spanish, like most of the ELLs they teach. Therefore, the use of L1 is encouraged and accepted as manifested by all three participants. Moreover, in Lisa's case, for instance, her main instructional goal is to develop Spanish proficiency in her students, complying with the mission of a dual language program. This is an example of the literature review findings by Borg (2003) which showed that teachers' practices are not only influenced by their PPK, but also by the social, psychological, and environmental realities of the school and classroom. Some of these realities include parents and principals' requirements, the school, society, curriculum mandates, classroom and school layout, policies, colleagues, standardized tests and the availability of resources (Borg, 2003). In Lisa's case, the most influential factors, besides her PPK, are curriculum mandates and parents' expectations, as it is up to their discretion to enroll students in the bilingual program. I further contend that it may also be a direct consequence of the positive experience she had in a bilingual classroom, during her elementary school years. In Luis's case, the main reason for accepting the use of L1 in his classroom responds to accommodations he sets forth for ELLs or newcomers, and relates back to the aforementioned theme of empathy:

I give them the opportunity if they choose to, for writing a composition and they would much write it in Spanish, they know that they can do the assignments in Spanish and they know I'll understand it, and they have that flexibility... They don't even have to request it. It is an option for them. They can choose to do that any time that they want... If they want to talk to me in Spanish, they can, anytime. (LJ11-2, p. 9)

For Dario, the purpose of allowing the use of L1 in his classes is twofold: like Luis, Dario has implemented the use of L1 as part of the accommodations he provides for ELLs and/or newcomers. Additionally, this practice seems to respond to Dario's drawing on his personal language-learning experience. This duality is depicted in the complementary passages shown below on the use of Spanish by Dario, and his students:

I think it plays a great role for me especially for my newcomers. I think, even though I said that I was a school boy, sort of, back in Mexico, I didn't know what a noun was, I didn't know what an adjective was. I probably could identify a verb but then the parts of the sentence are not... Most of our kids come in with not knowing anything about... In their own language. So this year, I started with in Spanish because back then, I didn't have my Vietnamese speaker. In Spanish, I went over the parts of speech, and for what I've seen, it has really made a difference for them because they now know what a noun is, they know what an adjective is, they know what a preposition is. Or if they don't know, they at least know that the words are classified into different parts of the speech. And that has really made a difference. (DS05-3, p. 12)

Some of these kids don't really... I mean, back then they didn't really speak any... Hardly any English. So, it would be hard for them to actually understand

directions especially. So, that tells me that if it comes to giving directions I might just tell them in Spanish, especially if it's at the beginning of the year. (DS05-3, p. 10)

Yes. I was allowed to use Spanish. Most of the times, yes. I don't remember a time when I was asked not to use Spanish. (DS10-1, p. 3)

Incidentally, the fact that all participants either agree or demonstrated that their language-learning experience had influenced their current teaching practices, made ‘influence’ become another phenomenological theme in and of itself. From their individual portraits, I learned that these experiences also resulted in the development of practical skills and knowledge, along with language learning strategies and cross-cultural understandings for some participants as part of their PPK.

Based on this premise, I will highlight specific practices participants employed with their ELLs that appear to have been influenced by their language-learning experiences and the enactment of their PPK. The main practices identified were departure from lesson plans, based on three principles: (a) teach to the moment, (b) promote students’ involvement, and (c) serve the common good (Borg, 2005); explicit vocabulary instruction based on the pedagogical knowledge domain of managing specific language items (Borg 2005; Gatbonton, 2000); use of L1 based on students’ language skills and ability (Borg, 2005; Johnson, 1992; Feryok, 2008, 2010); and instructional decision making based on classroom management, and beliefs about language and learning (Borg, 2003).

Luis, who firmly believes in the value of “teachable moments,” seemed to be the one participant who was particularly emphatic about departing from lesson plans in favor of those ‘teachable moments,’ if and when necessary. Besides his own beliefs and

convictions about the benefits of such approach, one of the main causes for his preference towards this teaching practice can be attributed to Luis drawing from his PPK. More specifically, I argue that Luis's language-learning experience has influenced this method. This argument is supported by some of the stories Luis shared with me about feeling as though his questions were always welcome, regardless of they were related to academic content or not:

I think the school wanted her to work with me on the academics, but for me that wasn't the priority. For me, the priority was learning to communicate, being able to understand other people. And so whether she was supposed to teach me academics or not, I remember going to her with my questions. This is what I wanna know, this is what I wanna learn [emphasis added]. And it was related to the language, it wasn't about the academics. (LJ10-01, p. 9)

Comparatively, I set up this statement in diametrical opposition to his assertions about prioritizing the teachable moments:

So I encourage them to ask questions, things that they want to know [emphasis added]. I think that I like to take advantage of those teachable moments when it's them that wanna know something [emphasis added]. There's something that I can answer for you because you wanna know it. That's my philosophy. (LJ11-2, p. 6)

And finally, Luis himself makes the connection and realizes how his language-learning experience and his PPK has influenced his teaching practice and the decisions he makes about departing lesson plans and taking advantages of teachable moments:

So I struggle with that, but it's important. It was important to me then. 'I wanna know this now. I don't care what you're trying to teach me, this is what I need to know.' And so, I made it a point back in the day to give them a voice and to try to

let them know that ‘this is your classroom too.’ It's not just about me. And so...it's just things that were important to me, things that I was curious... At their age, I would try to look back, and I would try to make sure that I gave them the opportunities to cover that in our own class [emphasis added]. (LJ10-1, p. 16)

He also admits that is a way to promote students' involvement because when he realizes that when he gives them a space to ask questions and bring to the table topics that are interesting to them, they feel valued, comfortable, and thus, more open to learning. Finally, he also affirms that these conversations have the ultimate goal of making students aware of their social responsibilities as citizens and members of their community, which aligns with the third principle of serving the common good, when departing from lessons. These affirmations are displayed in the following excerpts:

I also believe that the students need to be comfortable before they can learn anything. If they don't feel at home, if they don't feel comfortable with you, no matter what strategies you use they're not going to learn. So, like I said, make them feel comfortable first and then try to let them dictate the pace. Move only when they're ready, rather than when the schedule says. (LJ11-2, p. 6)

So I'm gonna teach you about being responsible and being a good citizen [emphasis added], even though it's not necessarily part of the lesson [emphasis added]. (LJ11-2, p. 6)

On the other hand, Dario exhibited practices that he perceived would help ELLs build content area vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. By having ELLs complete sight translations, pronunciation drills, and highlight content words in text, he believes they develop an awareness of semantics and improve their reading comprehension skills. He seems to favor a compartmentalized approach to language teaching, rather than a

communicative one, and I contend that this is reiterative of teachers drawing from their language-learning experience and their corresponding PPK. His approach to explicit vocabulary language instruction and grammatical rules is highlighted in this account of instructional strategies for ELLs:

Well, nowadays it's called computers. *Bilingual sites for looking up words* [emphasis added]. I do, and I actually encourage them to do it a lot, and I mean... There are different ways to think about it, I once was told that if you tell them the actual word, they're more likely to get it. But then, if they look for the word then, that effort they made might be more meaningful for them, 'cause they can make the connection as to when they looked up the word, it's... Besides the teachers telling them what the word meant. (DS05-3, p. 7)

I went over the parts of speech [emphasis added], and for what I've seen, he has really made a difference for them because they now know what a noun is, they know what an adjective is, they know what a preposition is. (DS11-2, p. 14)

In this example, Dario makes an overt association between his language-learning experience and his current methodology for language teaching. What is interesting about how this experience influences his instructional strategy of choice is what I have denominated a 'reverse effect' of PPK. In other words, this is an example of how the lived experience influences teachers to assign certain tasks because they were lacking or absent from their language- learning process:

We have been reading a story right here, and this story is about mapping the unknown, and all of the pink here are verbs, and all of the green, or greenish, are nouns. Some of them, most of them can already identify the nouns and the verbs in English, for the most part, of course. And then what I went ahead and did was

taking every verb, making a grid, and having them turn into the original verb, the present, the past, and the past participle of that verb. So the different forms of the verb. And I think that was mainly because when learning English and skipping so many levels at once, *I don't remember having learned the past participle from my teacher* [emphasis added]. (DS11-2, p. 14)

Equally important, the third major practice observed, that was impacted by teachers' language-learning experience and their enactment of PPK in the classroom, was decision making. This process was aimed at addressing issues related to classroom management, teachers' beliefs about language, cultural background, and language learning. Both Dario and Lisa provided the most representative examples of this practice. The following answer corresponds to a question I posed to Dario where I directly ask him what his decision-making process comes from. In it, Dario explicitly confirms how it comes from his own experience, and how it's associated with his classroom management strategies geared toward behavioral issues, and beliefs about language learning. His strategy of "walking around" was a practice that I had the opportunity to corroborate during my observations of some his classes:

Me: ...the decisions that you make sometimes, that we have to do a lot as teachers on the spot, where do you think that comes from?

Dario: *Mainly my own experience as a student* [emphasis added]. And my expectations from them, and also just common sense. Quote unquote 'common sense', because my common sense might be different than theirs, of course. But then also, one of the things that really helps, and I've seen it more than anywhere, most of my classes, is just walk around the room. Most of my students have been Hispanic students. I only had two years with Anglo students, in Spanish One,

actually three years. Walking around the room really makes a difference for my students because that proximity really makes them want to focus and want to not get in trouble. (DS11-2, p. 10)

Subsequently, Dario explains how ELLs' motivation towards required classes also affects behavioral issues in the classroom:

Some of these kids are in this class because they need to graduate. In the ESL class, I mean, by making World History, American History and Junior English are requirement for graduation, by then in this class, they're being accommodated through a watered down program, which I tend not to make it very low level as well. That's one of the struggles too, when it comes to discipline. (DS11-2, p. 13)

Next, Dario offers an example in which he adapts certain instructional strategies, makes modifications, revise and modify accordingly, depending on ELLs' linguistic and academic skills, cultural background, and complexity of tasks:

Now, how do I accommodate for the rest of the ones who don't? I usually, once I have given them an assignment, like I said before, I keep on walking around the room, and if I see something that they misunderstood, I talk to them personally, and try to have them fix their mistakes. Most of the times, I also have a word with somebody else, usually a kid with a higher performance and then the lower performance. Those two will be grouped together. That also makes a difference for them. (DS11-2, p. 13)

Finally, Dario also considers ELLs cultural, social, linguistic, and personal background to better inform his teaching practices and language instruction. Furthermore, he reflects on these factors to develop an understanding of the circumstances that surround the personal lives of ELLs, and the impact they have on their academic behavior

and performance. In the following excerpts, he illustrates this reflective process as he takes into account the various aspects that affect ELLs' lives:

Beginner ELLs. Some of them don't always come prepared. They have rough days, especially since it's the beginning of the day, they probably did not have breakfast, they probably woke up late, they probably have family situations that they deal with and their performance is affected with all of those factors. And therefore, they become very unpredictable when it comes to actually doing the work and finding the motivation and actually wanting to acquire the second language. (DS03-3, p. 6)

The school environment, and the home environment most of the times are very different from each other, and that makes them sort of outcasts in the school system. (DS11-2, p. 12)

Their cultural background is shaped mostly by their families. A lot of their parents, I'm not saying everyone, but then a lot of their parents don't know how to read or write in their own language, so that also... By them not seeing their parents reading or writing a lot, they don't necessarily perceive it as important, or they simply haven't seen that in their life. (DS11-2, p. 12)

In these instances, Dario articulates that he makes use of multiple strategies, as an outcome of his decision-making process, to address these issues. For instance, his practice of “walking around” serves multiple purposes. On the one hand, he claims that it helps in maintaining classroom disciplines, as it keeps students engaged in discussions, and on task. On the other hand, it helps him identify ELLs who might be in need of assistance, and thus, he is able to offer help on a one-on-one basis. In addition, he refers students to Google Translate, as a technology-related task to help ELLs with semantics,

when they search for English words in their native language. This, in turn, helps alleviate frustration, aid in comprehension, and lower ELLs affective filter (Krashen, 1983).

Finally, Dario appeals to teaching such as varying the topics of readings, offering life advice, and using real-life examples of success stories, to increase students' motivation and enthusiasm for learning, in spite of the social and personal challenges that ELLs may face on a daily basis.

Meanwhile, Lisa portrayed her decision-making process as one that is framed by three crucial factors: (a) the curriculum demands of the dual language program, (b) her beliefs about language-learning, and (c) the cultural value of language.

First and foremost, the pedagogical decisions Lisa needs to make in her 4th grade classroom are dictated by the linguistic and curriculum demands of the dual language program at her school. To this purpose, she is constantly assessing her classes in a formative way to identify opportunities for improvement and ensuring the programs main objectives: content knowledge and language development. For instance, Lisa elaborates on the fact that she needs to emphasize the use of the target language quite frequently. Otherwise, students will resort to their L1 and miss opportunities for practice. This situation makes native speakers of English, use English to communicate with other classmates, and attempt to communicate with Lisa as well. In addition, non-native speakers of English (ELLs) are forced to also use English for communication purposes, as a result of peer pressure. All in all, this deviates students from the main language objective of learning and practicing Spanish in the classroom. Lisa's expressed her concerns on this matter as shown in the following account:

Well, the English speakers will use English naturally, but the Spanish speakers are using more English than what they used to use before. So my principal came in once and she made that comment that she was hearing a lot of English and we shouldn't be hearing any of that, because this is a Spanish classroom. I have to be very conscious and I remind them, this is a Spanish classroom. 'Yo hablo Español. Tú hablas Español.' And whenever we're sharing, if that person, whoever it is, starts to speak in Spanish, I remind them 'Ah, ah, ah, Español,' and now other students remind them as well. Even if they are English native speakers, they will remind us, 'Oh, Español. Oh, Español.' And if I hear side conversations, I look at them. And I don't do that in a mean way. I try to make maybe a funny face, or a face that I just don't understand what they're saying, and I remind them, 'Español.' And when I hear English-speakers using their Spanish, I point it out. I make it a big deal. Because they, if they're doing it, they're trying very, very hard. (LS05-3, p. 8)

One of the things that I do is to first of all, to walk around because sometimes they could be talking but they could be thinking about other things. So I walk around and if I hear good ideas, I do share them with the class. 'Oh, so and so said this, it's a very good idea.' So now they know that they might be getting that extra recognition, that's one thing that I do. (LS05-3, p. 7)

With this in mind, Lisa decides to employ several different strategies, as described above, in order to mitigate the use of English. Some of these include explicit reminders for the use of Spanish in class, non-verbal cues (facial expressions, and gestures), positive reinforcement, and "walking around" which is one particular teaching practice she has in common with Dario.

Secondly, the decisions Lisa makes in regards to her language-teaching practices are related to her own beliefs about the value of language. Particularly, the linguistic and cultural value she ascribes to the Spanish language as a representative token of her culture, heritage and identity. This is supported in the works of Callahan and Muller (2013) who affirm that: “Language shapes who the children of immigrant parents are, not only in the home and in the community but in the school as well” (p. 48). Therefore, besides being part of the curriculum, and the main objective of the dual language program she is part of, her interest in encouraging the use of Spanish obeys to personal beliefs. The following statements better explain how and why Lisa emphasizes the use of Spanish in her classroom and her personal life:

Because I think that's part of who we are. And it could be because my parents migrated here and I could be second-generation, I don't know. Maybe when my kids get older they'll do something different, I don't know. But if, right now, as a parent, if I don't make them, or if I don't help them, no one else will. And I don't know, I just, I want them to be very proud of who they are, because I don't want them to feel like they have to fit in. I want them to know their worth. (LS05-3, p. 8)

I encourage them to use Spanish as much as possible. I don't... It's not like, you do not understand it, go ask your friend in English. No, we encourage them to use the language of instruction. If I'm speaking, if I teach Spanish, I encourage them to use it too. But if there are times where they need that help, they can get that help from their bilingual partner in their native language. (LS05-3, p. 9)

I encourage them to use their Spanish and we do a lot of sentence frames, or sentence starters because I want them to use their Spanish. And I think it'll come

with time as long as I just keep on reminding them. And I am very proud of speaking Spanish. I'm not ashamed. And I think that it's very important to have those role models, because if I was also using more English than Spanish, they would be doing it too. So I try... I obviously speak Spanish, I should be speaking Spanish, and I'm not ashamed of speaking it, and I do not... In my other school, you would go out to the hallway, and if other teachers saw you speaking Spanish, they will look at you weird. At Rosewood, it's all over the school. It's the same culture, so no one looks down upon you. Parents are used to it, students are used to it, everyone's used to it. (LS10-1, p. 15)

From the stories above, I also noticed how Lisa made connections between her PPK in terms of her previous teaching experience and her current one, to establish a comparison between the social climates of both schools. As a result, Lisa indirectly expresses her personal experience as a victim of linguistic discrimination (linguicism) or linguistic prejudice, as her use of Spanish was frowned upon at her previous job, whereas it is widely accepted and welcomed at her current one.

The third and final research question guiding this study sought to explain how the understanding of NNES teacher's language-learning experiences foster critical consciousness and lead to an implementation of critical pedagogy for linguistically and culturally diverse students. The findings revealed that the major themes surfaced in the study could potentially contribute to the development of a curriculum that better prepares pre-service teachers to meet the needs of ELLs. To this purpose, education programs in higher education institutions should increase the number of required courses that focus on second language acquisition, language teaching methods, culturally responsive teaching, and critical pedagogy. Empirically, I could observe practices that align with certain

foundational principles of a critical pedagogy approach to language teaching, even though none of the participants admitted to knowingly taking this approach to their teaching. My perceptions in regards to critical pedagogy practices were mainly gathered through statements and my own observations of their classroom teaching, practices, and behavior. From a critical pedagogy perspective applied to second language teaching, Pennycook (1990) affirms that:

empowerment would include not only a critical element that would aim to help students draw upon and investigate their own cultural resources and investigate other knowledge claims, but also a transformative vision that would aim to change the society itself and the possibilities it presents. (p. 311)

From this statement, it has been stated that the purpose of critical pedagogy in English language-teaching is twofold: developing English communicative abilities along with the skills to apply them in order to develop a critical awareness of the world, and promoting students' agency to improve the status quo (Crookes, 2013). From the multiple adaptations of critical pedagogy to language-teaching, I focused on these foundational tenets as described by Bercaw and Stooksberry (2004): (a) reflection upon the individual's culture or lived experience and a further application of that reflection to language acquisition experience and the world to transform it (praxis); (b) development of voice through a critical look at one's world and society, which takes place in dialogue with others and continuous reflection; and (c) social reconstruction geared towards equality for all citizens through active participation in democratic processes. Based on these principles, I attempted to establish connections between the participants' teaching behaviors, philosophies, beliefs, attitudes, and practices, and a critical pedagogy approach to language teaching.

The study's findings suggest that the participants, directly or indirectly, exhibited a critical pedagogy approach to their teaching in their own ways. In some instances, the teacher's instructional methods hint to a critical pedagogy tendency that is rather incipient and under development with opportunities for growth. At this point, it is noteworthy to provide the disclaimer that I never formulated or directed any questions related to the concept of critical pedagogy to any of the participants. The reason supporting this decision is that I sought for spontaneous statements, attitudes, or beliefs that the participants may have about this concept. Similarly, I attempted to identify teaching practices that were illustrative of a critical pedagogy approach through classroom observations, along with my analysis of teacher's reflections on voice memos. In summary, I put forth my best efforts to gather examples on this matter in the most natural and spontaneous way without participants being aware of such attempts.

Out of the three participants, Dario seemed to be the one teacher who showed the least amount of practices or strategies representative of a critical pedagogy to language teaching. From a grammar translation methodology to explicit instruction of grammar and vocabulary with a focus on content, his teaching philosophy is heavily influenced by strong beliefs on rigorous schooling and knowledge. If anything, Dario seems to unknowingly gravitate towards a 'banking system' (hooks, 1994). This is defined by hooks (1994) as the "...approach to learning that is rooted in the notion that all students need to do is consume information fed to them by a professor and be able to memorize and store it" (p. 14). Another way to explain his approach to teaching from a socio-cultural perspective is the "business as usual." This idea of not changing the current state of affairs in spite of difficulties or challenges has been also applied to the field of

education by analogy or association. Dario's "business as usual" stance is evidenced in the following statement:

I usually just keep on going with my program, because if the kids who aren't doing anything are not going to do it anyway, so I still have to keep with my program. So it sounds kind of selfish, but that's the only way it would work. I mean, once you start going with the pace then some of the kids who are lagging behind, they might take on the actual work, but then we don't really... I mean, it's not guaranteed that's gonna happen. (DS05-3, p. 4)

Notwithstanding, I argue that Dario's instructional methodology has the potential for a critical pedagogy approach to language teaching and learning. The supporting arguments of my projections for Dario are based on the fact that he showed interest in students' personal lives and is cognizant of the circumstances that influence students' motivation and academic performance, as previously mentioned. I suggest that this could be the initial step towards a pedagogy that includes critical consciousness if Dario incorporates students' reflections into their language, content, and learning tasks. This would fall in line with one of critical pedagogy's foundational principles to language acquisition, which entails the development of voice through a critical look at one's world and society. This process takes place in dialogue with others and continuous reflection (Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004). Furthermore, if Dario's incipient critical pedagogy approach to teaching is contextualized with Pennycook (2010) summary and compilation of critical pedagogy strands, I would argue that it may be categorized as critical English for academic purposes (Benesch, 2001). Given Dario's tendency to underscore the importance of academics and rigorous education, it seems as though this orientation of critical pedagogy would align with his teaching philosophy and practice. Within the

framework of critical English for academic purposes, the main goal is to help students optimize their performance in academic courses while prompting them to question and shape their education and learning journey (Benesch, 2001).

On the other hand, Lisa is a participant who has exhibited a stronger presence of a critical pedagogy to her teaching approach in terms of content and language. Through her instructional planning, Lisa continuously fosters an environment of inclusion in her classroom, which can be understood as mission of social transformation decreasing discrimination among her native speakers and ELLs (Riasati & Mollaei, 2012). Some practices implemented by Lisa that are representative of this approach include the use of ‘parejas bilingües’ (bilingual couples), pair work stations, and having students as the main source for information, clarification, and assistance. This was a practice that I observed frequently during instructional times, and it is also affirmed in the following statement:

Yes. Maybe because I use, ‘Parejas bilingües....O compañeros bilingües, which is the same thing, it's a pair of students, one English speaker, one native Spanish speaker. (LS05-3, p. 7)

They all have a bilingual partner. So, the first thing that we do is, go to your partner, because I will never translate anything for them, and I will not repeat instructions for them either, because they have their partner. So I give instructions, I teach the lesson, and they work with their partner. And after that, I won't help them. And if I see students who are getting maybe frustrated about the assignments, we'll have a talk, I try to calm them down, and everyone's expected to do their work. Because I feel like, if I am going to be giving in, next time they are not going to be putting the effort to complete their work, because they might

know that if they do this, they will be getting out of the assignment. (LS05-3, p. 7)

So, it's not like, they're not alone. They have their partner and they have their group. So I always tell them, 'Ask your partner. Ask your group. Your group doesn't know, you ask someone else. If that someone else doesn't know, ask the whole group. Continue asking until you're sure that no one in this classroom knows.' (LS05-3, p. 6)

At this point, some may argue that this constitutes a learner-centered approach or a social constructivist-teaching model as stipulated by Vygotsky (1978). However, I contend that Lisa's approach to content and language learning transcends collaborative learning methods. When group learning is paired with the inclusion of socio-cultural elements relatable to students' lifestyles and cultural background, the learning experience becomes a process through which students learn new ways of communication and understand the world through a special perspective. In which case, I would argue that this special perspective is the students' perspectives as they gain an understanding of and reflect on their culture and lived experience (Riasati & Mollaei, 2012). This is also in congruence with Akbari (2008) as he affirms that a strong focus on the students' culture as the point of departure for language teaching will make them critically aware and respectful of their own culture and prevent the development of a sense of inferiority. Some examples of Lisa's efforts to include elements of students' cultural background to her lessons are mentioned in the following:

I do know that I try to incorporate things from... Things that they could relate to. So for example, if there are certain shows that are very popular in Hispanic families, *Chavo del Ocho*. ...If we're doing that sound, 'Oh this is what I thought about.' If I can think of a character, like... I can't remember now, but there are

characters that tie with their phonics skill, I'll say it because they know it. We were doing letter Ñ, so it said 'Ñoño.'". They know who that is. They hear those things. I try... When we were talking about food, why only focus on pizza and hamburgers? Tacos, and I talked about The Taco Truck. Those are things that they know. I talk about, what else, piñatas. Those are things that they see at home, that they know about. Music again, if I... If there are... And if I do... It's not only about Spanish, it's English too. I know that some of the girls like One Direction, so I include it. I know that some of the students know about Shakira, I include her. Music that I think that they might like, I include it. If some are Hispanic moms, and that's like telenovelas. (LS10-1, p. 15)

The last excerpt is particularly relevant when explaining Lisa's attempt to reach out to all students' cultural backgrounds and personal interests. Its significance lies on the fact that she provides examples of her way of including cultural elements for both native speakers and ELLs. As she explicitly mentions, "it's not only about Spanish, it's English too." Through this, and other similar statements, Lisa expresses her desire to strike and maintain a cultural balance within her class. It seems as though Lisa's unspoken mission is to create a classroom environment that fosters inclusion and integration, with the goal of providing a space where students' voices are heard, being accepted and welcomed.

Finally, Luis emerged as the strongest contender for a critical pedagogy approach to teaching content and language. The strongest evidence toward his case is depicted on his adamant advocacy for 'teachable moments', along with prioritizing students' interests, whether or not they are related to classroom content. Considering that a critical pedagogy is required to manage the complex social system of the classroom and identify

the need of individual students, Luis presented scenarios within which students' inquiries took prevalence over curriculum needs.

Interestingly, although Luis may be unaware of his strong tendency towards a critical pedagogy approach, he constantly finds himself struggling to balance curriculum demands, school policies, and his own teaching beliefs (PPK), to guarantee that students needs and expectations are at the forefront of his educational endeavors. This struggle reflects the notion that critical pedagogy encourages teachers to reflect on their practice and be cognizant of the complexities of the educational process through various viewpoints. As explained in the next passages, Luis teaching philosophy is in a process of constant reflection and adaptation with self-assessment and criticism:

Once you teach for a while, sometimes you sit at those meetings and you hear, 'Okay, and here's what we're gonna try, here's what we're gonna do, and here's the newest thing.' In my mind, I'm like, 'Yeah, I've heard that before.' And so you kinda get a little more cynical about it and you just kinda learn to trust what you do. And I think I'm at that stage. I failed miserably in some things. I've had some success in others. And every year, you tweak things because you get a new group of students. The things that you did the previous year aren't going to be always effective. But like I said, as far as personality, and your approach or your philosophy to everything, to teaching, to classroom management, I try things. I try things, just if we get trained on something new, you take bits and pieces and you kinda assimilate that to what you do. But I don't know that I'm gonna change a whole lot. (LJ05-3, p. 14)

Mm-hmm. There's a lot of emphasis on that. And I'm not completely sold that that's the way we wanna go. And, I don't know, I mean... The old school person

says, 'No, this is the way we gotta do.' And I'm not necessarily old school in that sense, but I think you gotta have that that balance integrating some of the old practices, some of the things that work. Why? Why would we get rid of things that were working and jump onboard and now try this just so that we can find out two, three years later that it isn't what we were wanting? (LJ11-2, p. 5)

Luis's most salient example of a critical pedagogy tendency is demonstrated in his professional mission to prepare students to be active citizens in a fully democratic society. For critical educators, the goal of education is for social transformation towards an entirely democratic society, where each comment is shared and heard in an equal way (Riasati & Mollaei, 2012). To this end, Luis emphasizes the need to seize the moments in which students are eager to ask questions about topics of societal importance, bypassing other planned tasks if necessary. Moreover, in instances where the discussion is actually related to content, questions are still welcomed and encouraged. In sum, Luis's teaching philosophy, though unknowingly, is congruent with some of the principles of critical pedagogy. Even more so, when considering that under this approach, Language teaching and learning is centered around the idea of educating students, to understand why things are the way they are and how they got to be that way (Simon, 1992). Furthermore, McLaren (2015) states that critical pedagogy asks "how and why knowledge gets constructed the way it does, and how and why some constructions of reality are legitimated and celebrated by the dominant culture while others clearly are not" (p. 197).

To support my claims of Luis's thoughts, practices, convictions, and influence of his PPK towards a critical pedagogy philosophy of teaching, I have extracted the following narrative pieces:

So I would love to see us go back to having those ESL opportunities where you get to work with those kids in a small group and catch them up on what's going on. And it doesn't have to be just for ESL, if there are some students that are struggling with the academics, I think that's how we can justify it and we can bring those students in as well. But here in Peony, we have gotten away from that concept of small group instruction, and pulling students out of the classroom. We are more about integrating everyone and putting everyone in the classroom and...I don't know. Whether the scores tell us differently, but to me I think we have moved away from things that were successful and had been working for us.

(LJ11-2, p. 3)

Sometimes I think as teachers, we separate ourselves from the students. 'I'm the teacher, I'm the adult. You're the kid.' Aside from 'You're my student and I'm your teacher', there's no other connection. But if you can establish that, let them know that you're a person, just like they are. You have concerns, you have questions. There's a lot more that you have in common than you think. And if you can establish that with your students, the more comfortable that they feel with you, the more that they trust you, and if they can trust you and feel comfortable with you, the learning's gonna happen, and the discipline is not as much of an issue. I just... That's how I feel about it to this day. Try to make those connections with the students. Sometimes it's going to their soccer game. It's... If you've ever done something like that, you know how important it is to those kids. When they're at a music program and they see you sitting there, in the middle of the program, they'll wave their hand at you, so it's important to them. (LJ05-3, p. 9)

So often students are way too comfortable in doing things a certain way, and they don't want to try something different. I don't know if it's the fear of failure, but they just don't wanna try it. 'This method, I've done it before, it's worked for me so I'm just going to stick with it.' Yet if you teach them a different way and if you do a good enough job at it, oftentimes they'll figure out that they can do it easier in a different way. Some of them don't. Some of them learn it and they decide, 'Well I'm still going to do it this way.' And as long as it works, that's fine, but again, if there's a way that makes a little more sense, why not? We just try to expose them to different strategies. (LJ05-3, p. 8)

I also struggle with schedules as far as we adopted an idea of what's called The Literacy First motto. And it's basically what it is, it's an idea of teaching, and we talked about the anatomy of a lesson. And this is how much you need to have your APK, your Activating Prior Knowledge, and then you got your teacher input, and then you got your SAP, your Student Active Participation and then you got your ISS, which is the way that you assess. At my other school that I was at, the coaches that were training us in our own school, they were very strict. 'You gotta spend 10% of your time get doing to your APK and then you gotta spend this much time...' I can't. (LJ11-2, p. 5)

I'm one of those that I'm always listening to the students and I believe in teachable moments. Here, I could go crazy trying to explain something to you, but if you're not interested in it, I'm wasting my time. So instead, I'm listening to the kids, and if they have a question and it's somewhat related to what we're doing, I go there because that's what they wanna know. Okay, that's how I keep them interested in participating if I try to share my classroom. I try to value what they're saying and

that's one of the things with, I think, with one of these new ideas is that we've gotta do things and time everything and stick to the schedule, and sometimes you just can't do that. So I like to be mindful of the students in what they need. Now, some of the principals or all that, I think that I tend to be more of the in-charge kinda. They think that I need to let my students be more active. You know? And it's a struggle for me. (LJ11-2, p. 5)

My understanding of Luis's constant struggle derives from his strong desire to prioritize students' needs and expectations over pedagogical content. In addition to this, Luis experiences an inner conflict between his seemingly natural tendency to critical pedagogy, curriculum demands, and the expectations established by the educational system. In his attempt to challenge the status quo he finds himself frustrated at times with curriculum specialists' infatuation with the latest educational trends. His evident skepticism towards the rapid implementation of novel methods denotes critical thinking and a deep analysis of his educational goals, classroom needs, students' needs, and the potential values of said methods.

In conclusion, although none of the participants exhibited a clear approach to critical pedagogy in their teaching practices, my overall analysis of their teaching philosophy and instructional strategies, led me to believe that there is a significant potential for these teachers to implement a critical pedagogy approach to their teaching in both the content and language areas. The participants' tendencies to critical pedagogy were more evident, or more clearly delineated in some instances than others. Notwithstanding, my recurrent argument supporting these teachers' propensity to align their teaching practices to some of the foundational principles of critical pedagogy can be summarized and explained through the findings of a study carried out by Akbari (2008).

As a result, Akbari (2008) surmised that an effective method of introducing critical pedagogy into ELT classrooms should include teaching of students' local culture (Lisa), using L1 as a pedagogical resource (Lisa, Luis, and Dario), acknowledging and addressing students' real life concerns (Luis, Lisa, Dario), and making students aware of the struggles and challenges faced by marginalized groups (no clear indications observed). By relying on the fact that participants exhibited practices representative of some of these tenets, I came to the conclusion that the participants' approach to critical pedagogy is a 'work in progress' in need of further development.

Chapter 9

Discussion

I engaged in this qualitative study to expand on the current findings in quantitative research, which indicate that general classroom teachers of ELLs, who had language-learning experiences, reported favorable attitudes, beliefs, and practical knowledge for teaching ELLs (Faez, 2012; Flores & Smith, 2009; Varghese, 2008; García-Nevarez et al., 2005; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Paneque & Barbeta, 2006; Roach et al., 2003; Shin & Krashen, 1996; Youngs & Youngs, 2001). At a time when ELLs' presence is increasing at an accelerated rate in U.S. public schools (NCES, 2016), their achievement is reported to be low (Weyer, 2017; NCES, 2016), and general classroom teachers' preparation for teaching them has been largely overlooked in teacher education programs across the U.S. (Durgunoglu & Hughes, 2010; Samson & Collins 2012; Braine, 2013), it was critical to move beyond statistics to be able to understand the role that language-learning experiences plays in teachers' personal practical knowledge for teaching ELLs and to consider the implications for a more comprehensive and effective pre-service teacher preparation, and their future pedagogical practice.

With this goal in mind, I adopted a qualitative approach to data collection that entailed interviews, classroom observations and analysis of participants' oral reflections. This allowed me to identify what aspects of their personal practical knowledge could be attributed to their language-learning experiences and examine how it contributes to their teaching practices in regards to ELLs. In my analysis of participants' interviews about their language-learning stories, and instruction of ELLs, I found that resulting analysis aligned with the findings of quantitative research confirming that teachers with language-

learning experience, generally appear to demonstrate favorable attitudes toward the ELLs they teach. In this chapter, I delve into these findings by depicting the participants' language-learning experience, its influence on their personal practical knowledge, and the extent to which it impacts their instruction of ELLs. In sum, the results of this study provide an in-depth examination of previous understandings on the meaning of the language-learning experiences, and its influential role on teachers' personal practical knowledge for teaching ELLs. I will organize the previously discussed themes as they relate to the pertinent research question, and in a way that underscores the similarities and differences among the participants' personal practical knowledge along with the unique in way in which they each assigned meaning to their language-learning experience.

The findings for this study coalesced around three related themes, each of which focused on the analysis and understanding of the participants' experiences on learning English in the U.S. These three themes equally contribute to answer the first research question: "What are the experiences of individuals formerly classified as ELLs who have become bilingual teachers of ELLs in general classrooms or specialized ESOL programs?" The first theme, which I have denominated "becoming", highlights the ways that participants described the experience of learning English in a K-12 setting in the U.S. In this sense, all three participants agreed that regardless of the positive and negative events that marked this period in their lives, the experience of learning English brought about transcendental changes to their personal, academic, and professional lives, and thus, this "coming of age" through language learning, becomes a determining factor of understanding the essence of this lived experience. Waters (2016) explains that, in abstracting themes that represent the essential meaning of the experience, the focus should be placed in identifying those without which the experience would have not been

the same. Based on this assertion, growth or “becoming”, represents an essential aspect of the language-learning experience as presented by the participants, hence, becoming one of the emerging themes of the study. To this regard, Dario explains that learning English meant becoming a person who is bicultural at the cost of feeling confused and isolated. Lisa values her teaching career despite experiencing linguisticism and stereotype threat, while Luis feels accomplished but admittedly faced multiple academic challenges including poor academic and language support. Consequently, I concluded that the process resembled that of a “coming of age” in which the individual attains maturation and growth and eventually succeeds not without having his/her fair share of hardship and conflict.

As I reflect on my own language-learning process at an attempt to make meaning of the experience, I noticed similarities between the narratives shared by the participants and my own. In retrospect, my language-learning experience was also akin to “becoming,” as I also underwent cultural shock, confusion, isolation, and academic challenges. Throughout the data collection process: interviews, classroom observations, writing of analytic memos, and such, I would find myself constantly drawing parallels between the participants’ stories and mine, noticing that the common thread woven through our language-learning experience consisted of linguistic and academic achievement through hardship. This led me to the conclusion that “becoming” constitutes a fundamental part of understanding the essence of the language-learning experience.

The complex set of challenges, struggles, and issues that surrounded the participants’ language-learning experience, eventually contributed to the development of a keen awareness of the socio-academic struggles and challenges that their ELL students currently face. In a sense it seems that the participants could see themselves in the position

of the ELLs, by recognizing the troubled times and dire circumstances of the language learning experience, being replicated inside and outside the classroom: trying to make friends despite the language barrier, poor academic performance due to lack of resources and accommodations, culture shock, discrimination, and isolation.

As a result, empathy emerged as the most salient characteristic that teachers exhibit in their teaching behavior and attitudes toward ELLs, which they have developed by drawing from memories associated with their language-learning experience. The second theme, ‘empathy’, explains how the participants’ current teaching philosophies have been influenced by their language learning experiences as ELLs. In this sense, the participants seem to empathize with ELLs by drawing on the memories and lessons learned during their language-learning experience. By empathizing with the ELLs learning process, teachers are sensitive to the students’ plight and the varying circumstances that surround their academic experience including the language acquisition component. Some of the most determining factors that delineated empathic behaviors were understanding of ELLs language barrier, and therefore, allowing the use of L1; assertive decision-making towards behavioral issues by being aware of adverse circumstances ELLs may have such as: low parental involvement, extra-curricular responsibilities, lack of access to resources, cultural shock, isolation, anxiety, and frustration; and inclusion of ELLs’ linguistic and cultural background.

Finally, the third theme traces the influence of the participants’ language learning experience on their teaching of ELLs. The concluding remarks on this theme underscored the favorable attitudes the participants have towards ELLs. This was observed in concordance with the prior theme (empathy), as one behavior that illustrates said favorable attitudes. The conglomerate of perceived attitudes also included decision-

making based on curriculum and students' needs, acceptance and encouragement for the use of L1, inclusion of ELLs' cultural and linguistic background, and the implementation of a safe space for ELLs inquiry and interests. These major themes emerged as I sought answers to one of the research question, which was aimed at exploring the influence that the English-language learning experience has on their understanding of the needs and struggles of ELLs, and their teaching practices.

These three major themes explain the participants' meaning-making process (VanManen, 2016) of the language-learning experience. The participants understand the phenomenon under study as an experience that carried them through childhood and adolescence to adulthood, resembling the process of "coming of age." "Becoming" is associated with the language-learning experience representing a difficult, yet, rewarding time in their lives from which they are still reaping personal and professional benefits. The language-learning experience also signifies the development of empathy, as participants, implicitly and explicitly, ascribed their understanding of the social, academic, cultural, and linguistic struggles of the ELLs to their language-learning experience. Incidentally, the participants acknowledge that their language-learning experience also means being able to draw from the set of academic, social, cultural, and linguistic experiences to inform their instruction for the benefit of linguistic and culturally diverse students.

To answer the second question guiding this study: "How does the language-learning experience of bilingual teachers contribute to their personal practical knowledge and influence their teaching practices?" I deduced that the third theme (influence on teaching ELLs) would be the most appropriate, based on its relevance and evident correspondence with the question at hand. At this point, it is necessary to acknowledge

that this question has a set of sub-questions embedded. I will start by addressing the first one in reference to the relationship between the language-learning experience and PPK.

Firstly, the most evident way in which the phenomenon under study and the concept of PPK are connected is, in a literal sense, through experience. Clandinin (1985) refers to PPK as “teacher’s experiential history” (p. 363), and thus, every experience, including the language-learning one, amounts to the teacher’s PPK. Secondly, a comprehensive definition of PPK further explains that it is the “...body of convictions, conscious or unconscious, which have arisen from experience, intimate, social, and traditional, and which are expressed in a person's action” (Clandinin, 1985, p. 362). Clandinin (1985) clarifies that this notion of what teachers know is comprehensive, in the sense that it includes elements that have been compartmentalized and studied separately in previous studies. Thus, Clandinin (1985) contends that what teachers know encompasses knowledge of theory, philosophies, pedagogy, practices, and experiences. Based on this foundational concept of PPK, the language-learning experience constitutes an essential element of PPK of teachers.

In contrast with other elements of PPK such as knowledge of theory, practice, or epistemology, the language-learning experience contributes to PPK in providing the individual with a set of experiential narratives specifically related to the acquisition of language, along with its socio-cultural and academic implications. This accounts for a holistic understanding of the language-learning process that can be readily accessible when teachers “reach” into their PPK. From a comparative standpoint, the language-learning experience grants teachers the distinction of constructing PPK that is situated and shaped by experiential narratives of learning a language that a monolingual teacher will not have. As bilingual teachers, consciously or unconsciously, operate on the basis

of their distinctive PPK, they tap into a personal philosophy of language teaching and learning that is fluid (context-dependent), and infused with moral, affective, instructional and personal concerns (Golombek, 1998).

In reference to the second part of the question which addresses the influence of PPK on the teaching practices of bilingual teachers, the impact is evidenced when the participants admitted that their language-learning experiences, and thus their PPK, inform their instructional practices of ELLs. In this sense, PPK becomes an interpretive framework (Golombek, 1998) through which they filter their language-learning experience as students and people, reconstruct it, and respond to the demands of a teaching scenario. The findings of this study demonstrate how the participants utilize their PPK based on the values, emotions, and concerns derived from the language-learning experience, to implement it in instructional practices. The descriptions of Lisa, Luis, and Dario's experience of teaching ELLs reflect how their PPK has influenced their language teaching philosophy, the reasoning behind instructional decisions, and their beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes toward ELLs. Support for these claims come from statements such as the ones provided by Dario, when he explains the rationale behind his instructional approach to vocabulary teaching. He favors the approach of contextualizing vocabulary as an effective method for learning the meaning of new words, based on his own experience as evidenced in the following:

I think I did it best by actual finding the new words in the actual context. And that's something I've done differently since I started this class. I first started giving them lists of. So, I learned this by finding the words in context and I was doing lists of new words. But then, I realized that... I mean, we don't learn that way. We're not just given lists of the words when we're little and we have to learn

them. So, the natural way of learning new words is by reading stories and actually finding the words in context. That really helps. Let's say, you're talking about insects and then you find the word wing or eye, for the part of the body, but then you just find eye, if you are really into learning the language, you're gonna go back yourself and actually learn more new words that deal with parts of the body. But then, the actual teaching by the teacher or instructions by the teacher, is to read that story and learn the context of the story, and how the word was used in that story. (DS05-3, p. 6)

Lisa also provided an example of how PPK influenced her response and reaction to a particular situation or context, not so much from a pedagogical stance, but from personal concerns. Based on some of the emotional events she experienced as part of her language-learning process, Lisa has shown special care and attention to ELLs who may feel isolated, confused, or rejected by their peers, drawing links with memories of her own:

When I knew about this new kid in fourth grade, I just had flashbacks. I just had flashbacks and I thought, 'Oh, my goodness.' And I just thought of all these things that this kid could be thinking, all of these things he could be going through... I want to be that someone else that I didn't have when I was going through those same things...Because I know how hard it was. And I make sure that I say hi whenever I see him and we have very short brief conversations as I asked about his day, about different things. (LS11-2, p. 14)

Likewise, Luis contributed additional evidence related to the influence of PPK on the teaching of ELLs. He claims that by drawing from his language-learning experience, and thus his PPK, he is more understanding of the linguistic and academic needs of his

students. More specifically, he mentions being able to relate to their needs and struggles, and provide the needed accommodations on an individual basis:

It gives me the opportunity to *relate to the students* [emphasis added], to understand their struggles and to be a little more... Perhaps a little more patient, a little more understanding of the things that they have to deal with...it's just that having gone through it myself, I can definitely connect and relate those experiences with the students. (LJ05-3, p. 10)

In summary, the third salient theme of this study regarding the influence of PPK explains the significant ways in which it impacts the teaching practice of the participating teachers. It informs the instructional choices made in the classroom, the attitudes developed toward ELLs, and the body of knowledge these teachers have on language teaching and learning. Personal, academic, or professional experiences influence the reactions and behaviors of teachers inside and outside the classroom (Pedrana, 2009).

Along the same lines, incorporating the theme of empathy to the discussion of PPK provides insight as to how the language-learning experience helps understand the needs and struggles of ELLs in the U.S. As discussed earlier, Dario, Luis, and Lisa had shared how their experiences of language learning had turned them more sensible to the different challenges ELLs frequently faced in an educational setting. Etymologically, empathy comes from the Greek word *empathia* meaning understanding others by entering their world. It can be understood by what it is colloquially known as “putting oneself in someone else’s shoes.” Empathy allows us to experience the feelings of others and also reflect on those feelings while comparing them to our own (Zhu, 2011). In this sense, all three participants exhibited empathy towards ELLs throughout their narratives about the effects of their language-learning experiences on their current teaching

practices. This empathy goes beyond the understanding of ELLs needs from an academic standpoint, including situations and circumstances that involve ELLs' personal lives. For instance, Dario's empathy leads him to problematize the lack of motivation and poor academic of some of the ELLs in his class:

Some of them don't always come prepared. They have rough days, especially since it's the beginning of the day, they probably did not have breakfast, they probably woke up late, they probably have family situations that they deal with and their performance is affected with all of those factors. And therefore, they become very unpredictable when it comes to actually doing the work and finding the motivation and actually wanting to acquire the second language. (DS05-3, p. 6)

As previously mentioned, Lisa feels the need to nurture and protect those ELLs who might be victims of rejection, discrimination, or isolation, especially as they go through the process of becoming proficient in English. Additionally, Lisa's empathy is evidenced as she shares with her students her own academic and language struggles in an attempt to motivate them on performing difficult tasks:

I have to remind him, 'I know English is hard or Spanish is hard, I had to learn English and it was very hard for me, but I did it.' Just things like that and at the beginning he just couldn't believe what I was saying. And he knows it's true, and I just encourage him and I just... I know it's frustrating, I know this is not easy but you have to try. For him that's it. Keep encourage him, and show him that I did it. He can do it, too. (LS11-2, p. 14)

Similarly, Luis revealed empathy towards his students by acknowledging their challenges, and providing the necessary accommodations for the ELLs in his class as shown in the following statements:

So just keepin' an eye on him, making sure that I give him a little more attention than probably the rest of the class to make sure that he's understanding, to make sure that I don't lose him academically or otherwise. (LJ05-3, p. 11)

What I do think about is, if there's some concepts that are completely different, if there's some things that I feel my students aren't going to understand because of their ESL background, then that's when I plan the lesson. I kind of think about that, 'Well, is there something here that they're not going to understand because of their culture that I might need to explain a little bit more, that I can provide more background?' (LJ11-2, p. 8)

Besides the advantages that empathy has to offer for the benefits of ELLs in terms of their language and academic success, the learning-language experience of formerly classified ELLs is also a valuable source for understanding the needs of ELLs. As discussed thus far, this conglomerate of experiences carry significant implications to be considered for the development of instructional approaches and teaching effectiveness of ELLs, making important contributions to the field of TESOL and second language acquisition. By having formerly classified ELLs reflect and make meaning of their language-learning experiences, curriculum specialists, policy makers, stakeholders, pre-service, and in-service who have not gone through the process of learning a new language, can be better informed about common challenges and struggles, from those who experienced it firsthand. Among the predominant issues of learning English within a K-12 setting in the U.S. are: the emotional aftermath of relocating regardless of the

causes for immigrating, culture shock, isolation, low self-esteem, lack of accommodations and resources, absence of differentiated instruction, linguistic and cultural discrimination, stereotype threat, and low academic performance. These language-related issues have been outlined over the course of this study as they are an integral part of the phenomenon under study and promote the improvement of second language teaching methods. In addition, they contribute to the development of a conceptual framework through which they are problematized from socio-cultural and sociolinguistic perspectives.

The emergent themes of the present study and their implications prompted a process of reflection in reference to the last research question: “How can the understanding of the language-learning experience foster critical consciousness and lead to an implementation of critical pedagogy for linguistically and culturally diverse students?” The findings that resulted from the participants’ reflective process, as they made sense of their language-learning experience, could reinforce the advancement of language-teaching methodologies with a critical pedagogy approach (Freire, 1970). This was the outcome of my analytic process and interpretation of the participants’ statements about their teaching and observations of their practice in the classroom.

The types of socio-cultural challenges encountered by the participants as English-language learners, may contribute to the development of a culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010) and critical pedagogy framework in English Language Teaching (ELT) (Akbari, 2008; Pennycook, 2017). By underscoring the social implications of language-learning in the American educational setting, the scope of second language teaching widens to address issues that go beyond those associated with acquisition, mastery of skills, proficiency, and communicative competence. This, in turn, opens a space for

dialogue about inclusion, diversity, equity, and tolerance about students who have been historically disenfranchised and underrepresented. Given that the majority of ELLs are individuals categorized as minority, a critical pedagogy approach to ELT could be effective in developing critical consciousness and empowering culturally and linguistically diverse students. Further support for this claim comes from the fundamental principle of understanding language as an ideology (Kumaravadivelu, 2003a), and the socio-political implications of language teaching (Akbari, 2008).

A suggested framework of application (Akbari, 2008) seems to be already enacted by Luis as he frequently includes topics from society in his classes, and contextualizes class content to real-life situations, prompting students to reflect on their reality, world issues, and contemplate opportunities for change. Within the compilation and summary that Pennycook (2010) has made of critical work on discourse analysis, critical pedagogy, and critical literacy strands that have emerged throughout the years, Luis' critical pedagogy approach could be classified as critical multi-culturalism. This critical pedagogy orientation is supported in the works of Kubota (2004) who asserts that it is an approach that critically examines inequality and justice, and how they are perpetuated in relation to power and privilege. It also entails a critical understanding of culture by having students inquire into subject areas such as social studies and geography, which are usually taken for granted without questioning its origins, validity, and role within power struggles. The following account depicts Luis's practices aligned with this approach:

We talked about rights and responsibilities, the students really get into the topic. They're asking questions, they wanna know as far as 'Why is it important to vote? Who gets to vote? Why should I get to vote? What's the process? How do you apply for it?' And nowhere in my standard does it tell me that I need to teach my

kids how to register to vote. But they might be 10 years old now, but here in the next few years, they're going to be needing to do those kinds of things. And I kinda feel like it is my responsibility to plant those seeds. If they wanna know, I don't feel that I should have to stick to the standards all the time. It's something they wanna know, it's something that's important, it may not be necessarily my standard, it might be sixth, seventh grade, but what's the problem with giving them the information at the time that they're needing it? At the time they're wanting it? (LJ05-3, p. 7)

On the other hand, Lisa also exhibited behaviors and attitudes descriptive of a critical pedagogy approach to language teaching. According to Akbari (2008), an effective implementation of a critical pedagogy approach to ELT is achieved by transforming the class, and base instruction on students' local culture. By composing her narrative on teaching, Lisa described how she constantly tries to incorporate important aspects of the students' culture and topics of interest from the community. Following Pennycook (2010) compilation of critical pedagogy work in language acquisition, Lisa's approach may fall under the strand of critical bilingualism (Walsh, 1991, 2012a, 2012b). This critical pedagogy dimension implies going beyond the mastery of two languages, and develop an awareness of the sociocultural, political, and ideological contexts in which the languages are positioned along with their ascribed meanings (Walsh, 1991). The passage below showcases partial application of this pedagogical practice:

They hear those things. I try... When we were talking about food, why only focus on pizza and hamburgers? Tacos, and I talked about The Taco Truck. Those are things that they know. I talk about, what else, piñatas. Those are things that they see at home, that they know about. Music again, if I... If there are... And if I do...

It's not only about Spanish, it's English too. I know that some of the girls like One Direction, so I include it. I know that some of the students know about Shakira, I include her. Music that I think that they might like, I include it. If some are Hispanic moms, and that's like telenovelas. (LS10-1, p. 15)

As previously discussed, Lisa's pedagogical practice also aligns with the model purported by Akbari (2008) by allowing and encouraging the use of students' L1, which is also a practice exerted by Luis and Dario as part of the accommodations they provide for ELLs.

In the sustained efforts of making meaning of their language-learning experience, the participants elaborated on some of the teaching practices that they draw from that time in their lives when they struggled with language, adaptation, and self-confidence. This resulted in a sample of useful strategies that may be adopted to initiate or strengthen a critical pedagogy approach to ELT.

Connelly, Clandinin and He (1997) assert that teachers make a difference. Their knowledge, their personal practical knowledge, is an essential component to be considered for the development and improvement of pedagogical practices. Consequently, a conscientious plan to set forth the implementation of a critical pedagogy approach to ELT, requires: (a) paying close attention to what bilingual teachers know and the professional settings in which they practice, and (b) careful consideration of the narratives composed by formerly classified ELLs, as they provide valuable insight to the socio-cultural challenges they faced as part of their language-learning process. This is essential for incorporating key instructional strategies that seek to empower ELLs and develop their critical consciousness.

Chapter 10

Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this research study has been to explore the lived experience of learning English of formerly classified ELLs in the United States, and understand how it influences their current teaching practices. The findings I have presented in this narrative piece provide insight into the emotional, academic, professional, and socio-cultural aspects of learning English as a second language. Moreover, it can potentially contribute to the development of comprehensive education programs that are aimed at preparing pre-service educators to effectively address the needs of ELLs. These insights may be further complemented and enriched by future studies that would take into consideration the limitations and implications of the present study.

Limitations of the Study

For clarity and practicality, I have divided the limitations inherent to this research study into the following categories: participants, contexts of participation, data collection, and data analysis. In this section, I discuss these outlined limitations and explain what I believe to be the implications of each.

Participants and Contexts

First and foremost, the study had a limited number of participants, the main reason being the specific profile required to become an eligible participant. Potential candidates needed to be formerly classified ELLs with schooling experience in the U.S. within a K-12 environment. In addition, the participant had to be an active, in-service teacher of K-12 education, with ELLs in their classroom. Meeting these profile parameters turned out to be quite challenging, leading into the final recruitment of only three participants who matched the qualifying criteria. The main concern regarding a

small group of participants in qualitative studies is generalizability. To this respect, renowned individuals in the area of qualitative studies have stipulated that generalizations based on qualitative work cannot be made, at least not in a probabilistic sense (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Larsson, 2009; Polit & Beck, 2010). Their claims are based mainly on the fact that phenomena are contingent upon context and specific circumstances. In any event, the consensus is that the issue of generalizability is rather irrelevant since it does not represent a substantial goal for qualitative studies (Schofield, 2002). Instead, the focus should be placed on generating thick descriptions of the phenomenon under study (Geertz, 1973), allowing the audience to transfer the information to similar individuals or groups in a process which theorists have called translatability (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982), fittingness (Guba & Lincoln, 1982), or naturalistic generalizations. This process empowers the reader, and triggers interpretation through which decisions can be made about the applicability and transferability of the study's findings to other individuals or settings (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Another limitation of the study was time. From a longitudinal perspective, I speculate that other issues may have been explored if the data were collected over an extended period of time. Although there is no consensus on how long a qualitative study should be before it's considered longitudinal, the average has been set at approximately 12 months, representing time spent in the field (Saldaña, 2003). Furthermore, Saldaña (2003) discusses three foundational principles of longitudinal qualitative research: the length of the study, time, and change. These aspects complicate matter further because concepts of time and change may be relative and culturally contextualized. Time generally refers to the amount of time spent in the field (observations, interviews, focus groups, documenting), and change refers to changes in the field or the population under

study (a different generation, change in participants' perspectives). Based on these qualifying aspects, the present study does not meet the minimum criteria to be considered longitudinal, even though the entire process lasted more than two years, time spent gathering data did not exceed a span of six months. Moreover, no participants were changed during the study, and the group of students the participants taught was also the same from beginning to end, since the observations were carried out within the same academic year.

My anticipated conclusion is that if this study had been longitudinal, there might have been opportunities to explore other issues related to the language-learning experience of the participants as they relate it to a new group of students, considering their profile, needs, and expectations. Also, there might have been more time for participants to reflect on their teaching practices and their connection to the language-learning experience, perhaps even during the months when school is not in session (summer break). From this point of view, I consider time, or lack thereof, a potential limitation of this study and a recommendation for future studies with a similar line of inquiry.

Data Collection

It is noteworthy and beneficial to acknowledge the limitations of the data collection strategies selected for this study. Nevertheless, the word “drawback” seems to be more appropriate when discussing some of the disadvantages of data collection techniques such as oral interviews, and classroom observations. Oral interviews data tends to generate information that may have been affected or tampered by the participants' failed memory, unintentional omissions, and selectivity (Errante, 2000). The latter refers to the participants' decision to share, or not share, certain stories or memories

because of the emotions and feelings they may trigger, or based on the decision that they are better kept private (Errante, 2000).

The limitations inherent to observations as a method of data collection mainly refer to the human capabilities of capturing and recording every action in progress at any given time. Additionally, observations are also aimed at detecting and documenting all verbal and non-verbal cues or exchanges. This constitutes an overload of information for the observer and, thus, a lot of information or material does not get documented. The observer-researcher is constantly faced with the challenges presented by the “constraints of watching and writing in a rapidly changing social environment” (Hatch, 2002, p. 77).

For instance, when my attention was drawn to some relevant classroom activities, it may have been diverted from other tasks, conversations, or actions that were also worthwhile. In addition to this, the process of gathering data through observations for this study presented further complications when one of the districts did not authorize direct classroom observations. As explained in a previous chapter, the school board claimed that observations often caused unnecessary interruptions and distractions for both students and teachers, and had established a policy through which classroom observations were prohibited for non-school staff. The situation was resolved when the school district agreed to grant permission for recording classroom activities on the condition that the researcher was not present, and that none of the students appear within shot. Some advantages to the modified and conditioned observations is that it eliminated some of the issues previously mentioned in regards to classroom observations. For instance, I could pause the recording at any given point and take notes without fear of overlooking any activities, movements, or conversations. Technology, thus, proved to be an invaluable

tool for capturing and recording every detail from the classroom interactions in a literal sense.

Another important aspect to consider when discussing the implications of classroom observations is that, as an observer in the classroom, my presence may have influenced the behaviors of the teachers I studied, an issue that affects most research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). This is a fact that may apply to all three of the participants observed, even to the ones who were not directly observed since they knew they were being recorded and the videos would eventually be watched for analysis. Finally, it is pertinent to be cognizant of the fact that due to time constraints and logistics, the time spent observing or recording the participants was limited. This could potentially affect the representative nature of the data collected and its corresponding generalizability (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003), although I have explained that transferability would be a more suitable term and interpretive process for the purposes of this study.

Data Analysis

A final limitation is my analysis and editing of the data. In applying the analytical strategies outlined and described in Chapter Four, I modified my participants' narratives by reducing and reorganizing them. Consequently, the participants' narratives I presented in this study may not represent their meanings as they originally intended, even after conducting a "validity check" by returning to the participants to determine if the essence of the interviews has been captured correctly. In addition, by choosing to include certain passages for discussion and omitting others, I may have excluded perspectives and/or experiences that participants deemed critical to tell. Participants' stories, therefore, are ultimately a co-construction between the participants and the researcher (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994) and a series of representations (Riessman, 1993).

Implications of the Study

In this section, I discuss the implications I see for the field of ELT, teacher preparation programs, and school practices.

English Language Teaching

All of the participants in this study described English language-learning experiences ranged from being uninspiring, demotivating, and, frustrating, to beneficial, positive, and meaningful. The most relevant themes describing their understanding of their language-learning experiences were an experience of emotional growth, developing empathy, and impacting their teaching of ELLs. I believe the implications of these findings for the field of ELT profession is threefold. First, both native and non-native language teachers can benefit from formerly classified ELLs as they reflect on their language-learning experience, and utilizing it as a valuable source of information on the socio-cultural and socio-linguistic challenges of learning English in a K-12 educational setting. In addition, the implications of PPK, or teacher cognition, should become widespread in the language teaching profession. I also contend that it should constitute a fundamental component of teacher education programs, and professional development for in-service teachers. The third implication for the field of ELT is that an approach to critical pedagogy in language teaching can benefit from the understanding of teachers' PPK. By analyzing teachers body of knowledge, experiences, philosophies and beliefs as they are contextualized in their professional setting, the application of a critical pedagogy approach can be more effective, since it is based on the experiential knowledge of educators (Crookes, 2013). Moreover, this process should also consider the lessons learned from the language-learning experience of formerly classified ELLs, since this

lead the implementation of a critical pedagogy approach to ELT that effectively address the challenges and struggles faced by culturally and linguistic diverse students.

Teacher Preparation Programs

The first implication I suggest for teacher preparation programs is a set of recommendations that have the potential to enhance the way many of these programs currently prepare preservice teachers to teach ELLs. As teacher preparation programs set out to comply with the required competencies that they are responsible for teaching to preservice teachers, they struggle to find ways in which to integrate TESOL methods courses and often end up doing so to a limited degree (Menken & Antunez, 2001). This study's findings on the language-learning experiences of formerly classified ELLs have the potential to inform their practice for ELLs when this knowledge is brought to their attention by process of reflection and inquiry. I suggest that teacher preparation programs can prompt their pre-service teachers to examine their own language-learning experience to become aware of both the process and the outcomes.

Eventually, pre-service teachers will have the opportunity to examine how their PPK aligns with best practices that have been identified for ELLs. This study has led me to the conclusion that often times prompting is necessary so that teachers can make connections between their language-learning experience and those of the ELLs they teach. I further suggest that teacher preparation programs encourage pre-service teachers to identify such connections.

To ensure that pre-service teachers gain practice and confidence in applying their knowledge and continuing to build connections, I recommend that teacher preparation programs guarantee their students practicums, or student-teaching placements, in which they work with ELLs. By doing so, the pre-service teachers will develop a deeper

understanding of these students' needs while gaining concrete experience and confidence in applying their knowledge. Another valuable resource would be assigning a mentor to the pre-service teacher, for guidance, support, and encouragement, but must importantly, to prompt continuous reflection on the teaching experience.

The second implication for teacher preparation programs is that they should encourage pre-service teachers to engage in ongoing language learning. Research has shown that participants who had sustained language learning demonstrated a deeper knowledge of language-learning strategies, and favorable attitudes toward ELLs. (Faez, 2012; Flores & Smith, 2009; Varghese, 2008; García-Nevarez et al., 2005; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Paneque & Barbeta, 2006; Roach et al., 2003; Shin & Krashen, 1996; Youngs & Youngs, 2001). Further support for this recommendation comes from Nieto (2010) who asserts that "language diversity" should be an integral aspect of teacher education.

Suggestions for Future Research

Major findings of this study indicated that a deep understanding of the language-learning experience of ELLs would help establish solid connections between critical pedagogy and language acquisition. Furthermore, research with a similar line of inquiry may further contribute to the existing body of literature on second language education from a socio-cultural perspective. Therefore, teacher education programs can be expanded and improved by including courses that are centered around topics such as: critical pedagogy and second language learning, critical consciousness in language teaching methods, the effects of teachers' PPK on language teaching and learning, to suggest a few. This way, pre-service teachers will improve their perceptions of self-

efficacy, their attitude and beliefs toward ELLs, and feel better equipped to address the challenges and needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

In this section, I propose three areas for future study: (a) more in-depth examination of the personal practical knowledge of teachers with a similar or different profile, (b) exploring the effects of promoting teachers' reflection of their personal practical knowledge, and (c) the use of other qualitative genres on the same topic of study to complement the findings of this research.

Examination of PPK of teachers with similar or different profile

As discussed earlier, the participants' profile set for this study was very specific, limiting the study to a few eligible candidates: formerly classified ELLs whose language-learning experience took place in the U.S., and who have become in-service teachers in a K-12 setting. Therefore, I suggest that future research centered around language teachers' PPK include teachers with similar characteristics, or entirely different ones. I argue that findings from these studies will complement those obtained from the present one, contributing to the existing body of research on teachers' PPK and teacher cognition on TESOL.

Reflection as a practice for professional development

Based on the findings from this study, I highly value the importance of formerly classified ELLs making connections between themselves as language learners and the ELLs they teach. I contend that this can be achieved by encouraging teachers to engage in a process of continuous reflection on their language-learning experience and their current teaching practices. This process will prompt them to make meaning of circumstances surrounding their language acquisition, and gain insight into the personal practical knowledge derived from language-learning experiences. Consequently, it is essential that

schools create opportunities for ongoing, collaborative, and guided sessions that encourage reflections on teachers' PPK and its connections to the teaching of ELLs.

Same Topic. Different Methodology

Finally, my last suggestion for further research entails exploring the topic of language-learning experience and PPK as a source for the implementation of a critical pedagogy approach to ELT. The findings of this study identified three main themes associated with the meaning-making process of the participants as they made sense of their language learning: a process of becoming, developing empathy, and the influence of the language-learning experience on their teaching practices. Nevertheless, I anticipate that findings related to this topic may vary when approaching it with a different methodology. If future studies are kept within the lines of qualitative inquiry, genres such as case study, narrative inquiry, narrative research, ethnography, and grounded theory are some of the options available. Feasibility and appropriateness may vary depending on the purpose of the study and details regarding the research design. I would also suggest developing a different conceptual framework, one that may lead to other valuable insights on this topic.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval of Protocol

September 9, 2015

Alejandra Alana
alanaab@ku.edu

Dear Alejandra Alana:

On 9/9/2015, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	English language-learning experiences as a source of personal practical knowledge for non-native English speaking teachers of English Language Learners
Investigator:	Alejandra Alana
IRB ID:	STUDY00003044
Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Consent Form_Alejandra Alana.docx, • Alejandra Alana IRB Submission Form, • Consent Form_Alejandra Alana_v2.docx

The IRB approved the submission from 9/9/2015 to 9/8/2016.

1. Before 9/8/2016 submit a Continuing Review request and required attachments to request continuing approval or closure.
2. Any significant change to the protocol requires a modification approval prior to altering the project.
3. Notify HSCL about any new investigators not named in original application. Note that new investigators must take the online tutorial at https://rgs.drupal.ku.edu/human_subjects_compliance_training.
4. Any injury to a subject because of the research procedure must be reported immediately.
5. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents for at least three years past completion of the research activity.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 9/8/2016 approval of this protocol expires on that date.

Please note university data security and handling requirements for your project:
<https://documents.ku.edu/policies/IT/DataClassificationandHandlingProceduresGuide.htm>

You must use the final, watermarked version of the consent form, available under the “Documents” tab in eCompliance.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Dyson Elms, MPA
IRB Administrator, KU Lawrence Campus

Appendix B

Letter of Consent

“English language-learning experiences as a source of personal practical knowledge for non-native English speaking teachers of English Language Learners”

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Curriculum and Teaching at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this unit, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

To understand the experience of teachers who were English Language Learners and how this contributed to their personal practical knowledge and impacts their current teaching practices.

PROCEDURES

You will be asked to participate in a minimum of two interviews that will range from 60-90 minutes. These interviews will be recorded and you have the right to have the recorder stopped at any time. Also, the researcher will visit your classroom twice and may request one additional visit. These classroom observations will NOT be filmed or recorded. Finally, you will

be asked to record a total of 5 voice memos of approximately 5 minutes in length, reflecting on your current teaching experiences. The researcher will transcribe the audio recordings; they will be safely stored in a secure server, and promptly destroyed at the end of this study.

RISKS

No risks are anticipated for your participation in this study.

BENEFITS

The present study seeks to contribute to the existing body of literature in Second Language acquisition teaching and learning, and the redesign of current pre-service educators programs to better prepare teachers to address the linguistic and cultural challenges faced by English Language Learners.

PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY

Your name will not be associated in any publication or presentation with the information collected about you or with the research findings from this study. Instead, the researcher(s) will use a study number or a pseudonym rather than your name. Your identifiable information will not be shared unless (a) it is required by law or university policy, or (b) you give written permission.

Permission granted on this date to use and disclose your information remains in effect indefinitely. By signing this form you give permission for the use and disclosure of your information for purposes of this study at any time in the future."

REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to sign, you cannot participate in this study.

CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose further information collected about you, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to:

Alejandra Alana

Joseph R. Pearson Hall, Rm. 321

1122 West Campus Rd.

Lawrence, Kansas 66045-3101

If you cancel permission to use your information, the researcher will stop collecting additional information about you.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher(s) listed at the end of this consent form.

PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION:

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385, write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7568, or email irb@ku.edu.

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

_____	_____	_____
Type/Print Participant's Name	Date	Participant's Signature
Researcher Contact Information	Advisor	
Alejandra Alana	Lizette Peter	
Principal Investigator	Faculty Supervisor	
Joseph R. Pearson Hall, Rm. 321	Joseph R. Pearson Hall, Rm. 321	
1122 West Campus Rd.	1122 West Campus Rd.	
Lawrence, Kansas 66045-3101	Lawrence, Kansas. 66045-3101	
(513) 593-1724	(785) 864-4435	

Appendix C

Guiding Questions for Interviews

Questions about school (ELL experience)

- 1) Where are you from?
- 2) Where is your family from?
- 3) Where did you go to school?
- 4) Did you and/or your family move a lot?
- 5) Where did you grow up?
- 6) What type school did you attend?
- 7) Would you classify the school you attended as rural, urban or suburban? Why?
- 8) What languages did you speak at home with your family, parents, guardians or relatives?
- 9) What language do you speak now with them?
- 10) Are you married? Do you have any children? If so, what language(s) do you speak with them?
- 11) Were you classified as LEP/ESL/ELL at any point throughout your K-12 experience?
- 12) Please explain the type of ESL/ESOL/ classes you were in or the ESL/ESOL services provided to you by the school.
- 13) If you were in a class, how large was it?
- 14) How many teachers were responsible for said class?
- 15) How were you exited from your ESL/ESOL program/class?
- 16) How long did it take you to exit the program?
- 17) How often did you receive help and support for homework or assignments?

- 18) How often did you receive assistance for examinations? What kind of assistance?
- 19) Were you required to take a standardized test?
- 20) If so, what kinds of accommodations were given for these tests?
- 21) What were the biggest challenges you faced during your language learning experience?
- 22) Why do those particular experiences stand out to you?
- 23) How did those challenges/experiences affected you?
- 24) Did you enroll and participate in any extracurricular activities? Why or why not?
- 25) If so in what type of activities?
- 26) How would you describe your overall school experience?

Questions about college

- 27) What compelled you to become a teacher?
- 28) What did you major in?
- 29) Please provide a brief summary of the classes you took during your pre-service training.
- 30) Were you required to do any research work for your degree (thesis)? If so, what was the topic?

Questions about teaching

- 31) How long have you been teaching?
- 32) Would you consider your entire teaching experience as formal instruction? If not, please explain.
- 33) What class(es) do you currently teach?
- 34) Have you taught any other classes? If so, which ones?
- 35) What is your average class size?

- 36) Would you classify the school you teach at as rural, urban or suburban? Why?
- 37) Do you have any ESOL endorsements or certificates?
- 38) How would you define your teaching style?
- 39) What is your teaching philosophy?
- 40) What kind of activities does your school promote for professional development and in-service training?
- 41) Do you do any on your own? If so, please describe.
- 42) Have you taught or currently teach any ELLs?
- 43) Do you currently have any students who are officially classified as ELL/ESL/LEP?
- 44) What are their strengths? How do you notice these?
- 45) What kind of challenges do they face? How did you come to know about these?
- 46) What activities, tasks, instructional methods do you employ to support these students in your classroom?
- 47) How does the school support these students?
- 48) Tell me about the lessons you have planned for this week. How do you anticipate the students (and ELLs) will respond to this lesson?
- 49) In what ways have you provided accommodations for ELLs in these lessons? If you do not teach ELLs, how would you plan for them? Why?
- 50) In what ways do you draw on your own English language-learning experiences when planning for ELLs' learning in your class?